Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/shortsermons0005unse

"This book is mine."

Rev. Mr. J. C.

252.1
H910

SHORT SERMONS

FOR ALL THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR.

BY

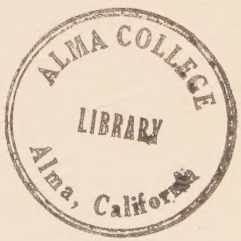
REV. FRANCIS HUNOLT, S.J.

TRANSLATED, MODERNIZED, CONDENSED, ARRANGED, AND ADAPTED
BY

REV. AUGUSTINE WIRTH, O.S.B.

VOL. V.

THE CHRISTIAN'S LAST END.



NEW YORK, CINCINNATI, CHICAGO:
BENZIGER BROTHERS,
Printers to the Holy Apostolic See.

17191

Copyright, 1896, by Rev. Augustine Wirth, O.S.B.

First Sunday of Advent.

THE TERRIBLE SIGNS THAT ARE TO PRECEDE THE LAST DAY OF GENERAL JUDGMENT.

"*There shall be signs.*"—Luke 21 : 25.

All Catholic Christians believe that in his second advent Jesus Christ shall come as the Judge of the living and the dead, but no man knows the day of his coming. Yet the world shall be able to learn that the day of judgment is at hand from the signs that Christ himself has announced as forerunners of the last day. There shall be terrible signs in the heavens and in all the elements.

I. These signs and their causes I shall explain, and prove that

II. These signs shall be to the wicked a source of fear and anguish, but to the good a source of joy and exultation.

When the three and a half years of the reign of Antichrist shall have expired, then, says our Lord, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved" (Matt. 24 : 29). All the elements shall be disturbed; the air shall resound with fearful storms and thunder; the sea and all waters shall be disturbed by mighty waves rising and falling; the earth shall be shaken and almost riven asunder by earthquakes that shall swallow whole cities, while fire shall burst forth with a great roar from the mountains and caverns. In a word, the wheels of the vast clock of the world shall be all broken and disordered,

as a sign that the last hour of judgment is at hand, and such shall be the fear, anguish, and faint-heartedness of men and the howling and roaring of beasts that no one will know where to turn or what to do.

Why that great disturbance and consternation of all creatures? First, it is a sign of compassion, and, as it were, a fainting and death-agony of all nature at the destruction of the world. When the head of a household is at the point of death the whole family is disturbed and bewildered; the wife weeps and tears her hair in an agony of grief; the children give vent to their sorrow in noisy cries; the relatives weep; the servants run hither and thither, sighing and moaning; the death-knell tolls its sorrowful note from the church-tower; friends and neighbors clad in mourning come to the funeral. All is grief and lamentation. So shall it be when the end of the world approaches, and the human race, the head of this household of the world, is at the last gasp; all nature shall be stricken with fear and consternation; the sky shall lose its luminaries and put on the sable garb of night; the elements shall, as it were, weep, and become quite bewildered, while the atmosphere, resounding with thunder and violent hurricanes, shall be, so to speak, the death-knell of the dying world.

Moreover, these signs shall show forth the great anger and displeasure of the Almighty at sinful men. The heavens now announce the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands (Ps. 18 : 2). But then they shall declare the anger of God against the wicked. For the stars of heaven and their brightness shall not display their light: the sun shall be darkened in his rising, and the moon shall not shine with her light. And what then? "And I will visit the evils of the world, and I will make the pride of infidels to cease, and will bring down the arrogance of the mighty" (Is. 13 : 9-11). Sun, moon and stars groan and complain at having to give their light to men to be misused in offending and insulting God; the earth,

fire, water, air, beg, as it were, the Almighty to free them from the servitude in which they are to sinners.

At the end of the world all creatures shall be set at liberty and released from slavery, and like a mighty army they will all rush in a body against the wicked to put them to shame. The sun will declare war; the moon, colored like blood, and the stars, disturbed out of their course, shall begin the battle. We, they will say, have given our fair light for such a long time to sinners who were unworthy of it; we have marked for them the hours, days, weeks, months and years; we have by our regularity in our motions set them a good example of the obedience they owe to God; but they preferred to follow the suggestions of the devil, the appetites of the flesh, the customs and maxims of the perverse world, instead of obeying the law of their Creator; therefore our period of service is at an end for them, and we shall be to them henceforth only a source of fear and consternation.

The four elements shall take the field against sinners. The air that gave them breath and voice, so that they could breathe and speak; from which they received the fruitful rain; in which the birds dwelt, to their delight and nourishment—the air will attack them on all sides; it will throw down buildings by the violence of opposing winds; it will tear up trees by the roots; send down hailstones to strike the beasts of the field dead, and with thunder and fierce lightnings and terrible apparitions that shall be seen in the air, it will fill every one with dismay.

The water that supplied sinners with drink and with fish for their food, and that carried them from one country to another in the pursuit of their business, will then overstep its boundaries and inundate the adjoining land far and wide; it will rage and foam against the godless, ready to swallow them up as it did Jonas. Be ashamed, oh, Christian! the sea shall cry out with its rushing waves; be ashamed that I, who have no understanding like you, have been for six thousand years obedient to my

Creator, and have not gone as much as the breadth of a grain of sand beyond the limits he marked out for me, but have always kept within bounds; while you, on the contrary, endowed with reason and countless benefits, allured by the hope of heaven, terrified by the fear of hell, have yet often and deliberately transgressed the commands of God and wallowed in a very sea of vice!

The earth, which has hitherto served even the wicked for their nourishment, clothing, dwelling-place, and pleasure, supplying them with everything in such plenty—the earth will then open with continual quakings, and, as it were, cry out for vengeance against the sinner for having so wantonly and ungratefully misused its gifts. The wild beasts will come forth out of their caves and dens with horrible howlings, and follow up the sinner everywhere, filling him with terror. Where will sinners creep in order to hide themselves, or to find comfort and consolation, when heaven and earth are in such disorder and are uniting their forces to attack them? Our Lord has already told us how men shall feel on that day: "Men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world" (Luke 21 : 26).

The wicked shall indeed wither away with fear and dismay, and seek to hide themselves under the earth; they will howl and moan and lament. We must surrender; there is an end to all the pleasures and delights we enjoyed on earth; we must leave our wealth behind us; the last day is at hand; in a short time the terrible trumpet shall sound in our ears the words: arise, ye dead, and come to judgment! Soon shall we appear before our angry Judge, whom we have despised and made our enemy by our sins! Soon shall we hear the awful words: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt. 25 : 41).

But what shall be the feelings of the just servants of God? How will it be with them? Hear what Christ says to them, after having spoken of the terrible forerunners of the last day:

"But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift your heads: because your redemption is at hand" (Luke 21 : 28). To go with downcast head is a sign of sorrow and fear, and, my dear children, that is not for you, but for the wicked who refused to love and honor me. Let them wither away for fear, because they have no part in my eternal kingdom; but you, just souls, who have kept my law and in all things tried to do my will, "look up and lift your heads;" rejoice and be glad! Why? "Because your redemption is at hand!" This is the time for which you have been sighing so long; the time for your release from captivity, from all dangers and troubles; the time for you to enter into the eternal repose of the children of God. This is the time when I shall make known to the world your humility and other virtues, which men knew nothing of, and vain worldlings despised you for! Rejoice! your redemption is at hand; the kingdom of heaven will soon be opened to you. Come, ye blessed! possess the kingdom that my Father and yourselves have prepared for you! Come with me into everlasting joys!

"See the fig-tree, and all the trees," continues our Lord; "when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh. So you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand" (Luke 29 : 30, 31). His meaning is, in winter-time the trees are bare, without leaves or fruit, and covered with snow as with a mourning garment; but when the pleasant springtime comes, what a change takes place in them! They are adorned with the fresh buds, with green leaves and fruit, and the birds sing joyous melodies in their branches. So it is also with you, my faithful servants. Hitherto you have had the cold winter-time; you were hated and despised by the world, which you disregarded for my sake; you have often had to groan under the pressure of adversity, but now, when you shall see those signs of the spring and eternal summer, "look up and lift your heads: because

your redemption is at hand." You shall be crowned with a crown of everlasting joys.

It was this thought that brought such consolation of spirit to St. Paul in his manifold trials and persecutions, as he writes to his disciple Timothy: "The time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith." I have been true to my God, and now what have I to expect from him? "As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day: and not only to me, but to them also that love his coming" (2 Tim. 4 : 6-8). It is for that we should long unceasingly, as our Lord himself has taught us to pray daily: "Our Father, who art in heaven; thy kingdom come!"

What should be our thoughts on this subject? If these awful portents were visible in the heavens this very day to announce to us the end of the world, should we all have occasion to lift our heads and to await the coming of our Judge with joy and exultation? Would you, oh, ambitious man, rejoice, who now value the esteem of men more than the grace and favor of your God? Would you rejoice, oh, avaricious man, whose greatest and only care every day of your life is to amass wealth in every possible way? Would you rejoice, oh, unchaste man, who have hitherto indulged your foul passions, and by your wicked importunities have seduced many an innocent soul; who still continue to live in unlawful intimacy with one who has captivated your heart in the meshes of impure love? Would you rejoice, oh, vindictive man, who still nourish anger against your neighbor, and indulge in dreams of revenge? Would you rejoice, oh, drunkard, who on every occasion that offers itself rob yourself of your reason, and ruin yourself and those belonging to you? Would you rejoice, oh, vain child of the world, who are still so much attached to the world and know no law but its false maxims, leading meanwhile an idle, tepid life? In a word, all of you who have a mortal sin on your con-

sciences, would you exult at the coming of your Judge? Alas! it is easy to speak to you of joy! Fear, anguish, terror, withering away for fear; such are rather the sad effects that those signs will have on you. Ah, why, then, do we not fear to offend God? How can we dare to spend even one hour in the state of mortal sin? For if death were to surprise us then, we should have nothing to expect but judgment without mercy and a hell without end.

Pious souls who have a good conscience! for you is the joy, the exulting hope! Only continue to serve your God with fidelity and zeal! "We should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Afflicted Christians, who have to suffer all kinds of trials and contradictions, what are you to think? Your sorrows, no matter how great they may be, that now afflict you, if you only bear them with a good conscience and resignation to the divine will, are for you infallible signs of future glory in heaven. To comfort yourselves, then, and alleviate your sorrow, say to yourselves: What I am now suffering shall come to an end; it will not last long; every day brings me nearer to my release. If I am poor and destitute for a short time, this very poverty is a sure sign of future riches in heaven. If I am despised, persecuted by the world, and abandoned by men, this humiliation is a sign of my approaching glory and honor in the society of the elect in heaven. If I now suffer injury and loss in my worldly goods, this loss is a sign of my future gain, of a treasure that awaits me in heaven. If I now weep with sorrow and trouble, it is a sign of my future joy in heaven. If I am now sickly and weak, it is a sign of future eternal well-being in heaven. If I am now obliged to work hard every day in order to support myself and those depending on me, it is a sign and forerunner of future eternal repose in the kingdom of heaven. Therefore I will resign myself to God's will and providence: with the help of his

grace I will suffer as long, how, and whatever he may will me to suffer! No matter how great my troubles may be, they shall not be equal to the joys of heaven. "Looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." With this consolation I will rejoice in all my trials, and say with Job: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth....and in my flesh I shall see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold: this my hope is laid up in my bosom" (Job 19 : 25-27). This one hope is comfort enough for me. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE JUDGE AS GOD.

"*Then they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty.*"—Luke 21 : 27.

Terrible shall be the coming of the incarnate Son of God on that day of judgment! Signs shall be seen in the sun, moon, and stars; the swollen sea shall fill all hearts with dread by its roaring and rushing waves; men shall wither away with fear! But all that should not frighten us. These things are mere forerunners of the general fear that is to follow. "Then they shall see the Son of man coming with great power and majesty;" that is the sole cause of the dismay that must fill our minds. With reason does the Church sing: How men shall shudder at the coming of the Judge! And who is that Judge? He will be an exceedingly terrible Judge, especially to those who have a bad conscience.

I. A terrible Judge, because he is God.

II. A terrible Judge, because he shall then be a God without mercy.

When Adam had lost his innocence, the voice of God in Paradise filled him with such awe that he hid himself among the trees of the gardens. Although the Israelites were the chosen people and were called the people of God, yet when they heard his voice from afar coming out of the dark cloud, "being terrified and struck with fear they stood afar off, saying to Moses: Speak thou to us and we will hear: let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die" (Exod. 20 : 18, 19) through excessive awe and terror. Thus they preferred to deal with a mortal like themselves in preference to God, whose greatness and glory they feared and could not endure. Oh, if mere men were to judge me at the end of my life and on the last day, I should not be half so much afraid of the judgment, for I should have some hopes of making out a good case for myself and escaping condemnation. But he who will then be seated on the throne is not a weak, fallible man, but God, and therefore an almighty and all-knowing Judge. "Then they shall see," says the Evangelist, "the Son of man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty" (Luke 21 : 27). He will be the Judge of whom Moses has said: "The Lord is a man of war: Almighty is his name" (Exod. 15 : 3). A God whose might no one can withstand, whose hand no one can escape. "A God whose wrath no man can resist" (Job 9 : 13). A God who will not except any man's person, neither will he stand in awe of any man's greatness.

The mighty power of this Judge was not visible when he was amongst us on earth as a poor, weak mortal, like to us; but it will appear on that day, when he shall be seen seated on a throne with great power and glory. When he was subject to the judgment of men the world did not know him; but he shall be known when all men shall have to submit to the sentence he

pronounces on them: "The Lord shall be known when he executeth judgments" (Ps. 9 : 17), when he shall exercise his authority as Judge of the whole human race. Who knew what a great, mighty Lord he was when he was bound in chains and led before the high-priest, and when he stood so humbly before Pilate and Herod? But the day shall come when all mankind, assembled in the valley of Josaphat, shall shake with fear before his tribunal: "The Lord shall be known when he executeth judgments." Who saw any trace of Almighty Godhead in him when he was condemned to death as a poor sinner amid the jeers and laughter of the Jews, and nailed to the shameful cross? But wait till he pronounces the sentence of condemnation on the judges, kings, and emperors of earth: then "the Lord shall be known when he executeth judgments." He still abandons himself, as it were, to the wantonness and contempt of wicked men, as if he were unable to defend himself or to restrain their malice; but let them fall into his hands on the day of his wrath: then they shall feel whom they have been fighting against, and what a mighty Lord he is whose anger they have provoked. "If thou shalt see the oppression of the poor, and violent judgments, and justice perverted in the province, wonder not at this matter;" be not surprised at the prosperity of the wicked, the persecutions the just have to suffer, the oppression of poor widows and orphans, the pride and wantonness of the rich; "for he that is high hath another higher" (Eccles. 5 : 7), who will one day justify his judgments before the whole world, and they who seemed to bear the globe on their shoulders shall have to bow down before him.

In the history of Greece we read that the hero Agesilaus was small of stature, but great in mind and valor, skilled in arms and generalship, and one of the greatest heroes of his time. King Agis had a great desire to see one of whose exploits he had heard so much, but when he met Agesilaus he began to ridicule him, and said in a mocking tone: "I behold an ant,

when I thought I should see a lion." Ready and clever was the answer Agesilaus gave the proud king: "I seem an ant to you," said he, "but one day you shall find me out to be a lion." The same answer is suited to those who now during life do not fear the great God, despise him, sin recklessly, and remain obstinately in sin as declared enemies of God. They see in our churches pictures or carved images representing our divine Lord in a very lowly and apparently despicable state, as a weak Child in the crib, or as a dying Man hanging on the cross, or else they know that he is concealed under the white Host, from which no thunders or lightnings flash forth to announce his majesty, and from this they conceive a low idea of God, and do not fear to offend him by transgressing his commandments. But he whom we now treat so contemptuously shall one day appear as a lion, and fill all creatures with awe by the might of his greatness. He who will judge us is an almighty God, and consequently he is able to defend us against those who now oppress us, and it is from him that we have to expect our reward. But, on the other hand, woe to us, oh, sinners! if we fall into the hands of this Judge burdened with debt. There is no chance of escape from him, because he is the Almighty God!

Nor can you hope to hide anything from him, because he is also an all-knowing God, from whom nothing can be concealed, with whom the rule, "deny, if you have done anything wrong, until the crime is proved," will be of little avail. When a man commits a sin he does not believe, or perhaps thinks not for the moment, that the all-seeing eye of the Judge is on him. "Who seeth me?" he asks with the wicked man: "darkness compasseth me about, and the walls cover me, and no man seeth me; whom do I fear?" (Ecclus. 23 : 25, 26.) I am shut in between four walls, and no one is aware of what I am doing. If I have a secret hatred against my neighbor, and try to do him harm here and there when I have the chance, who knows anything about it? I show nothing outwardly; I greet him in the most

friendly manner. If I have betrayed my neighbor, and caused him to suffer loss by craft, or bribery, or false testimony, who knows of it? It is all hidden under the mantle of the law. If I avail myself of all kinds of underhand practices in buying and selling, if I lie and cheat in business, who can find me out? So far no one has detected me. If I fish in troubled waters and make unlawful profit here and there, who can accuse me of it? If I amuse myself with all sorts of evil thoughts and desires, and wilfully entertain them, who knows anything about it? No one can suspect me of such a thing. If I entertain an unlawful intimacy and commit many sins in secret, not a soul can know of it; no one can read my guilt on my forehead. My husband thinks that I am true to him at all times; my parents believe that I have not lost my first innocence, that I know not what sin is; in the presence of others I am able to act as if I could not bear the sight of a certain person; all is kept quiet; there is not the least suspicion of anything. So thinks the sinner. But he does not understand that God's eye seeth all things; that the eye of the omnipresent God beholds all things, and that the all-knowing Judge allows nothing to escape him, but writes everything down in his great account-book.

We must therefore lead pious lives, since we act before the eyes of a Judge who sees all things, a Judge who knows all our thoughts, intentions, desires, words, and works. Oh, mortals! think and judge of me as you please, I hold with St. Paul: "To me it is a very small thing to be judged by you. He that judgeth me is the Lord" (1 Cor. 4 : 3, 4). Think and say of me, if you wish, that I am a good-for-nothing, wicked man; he who has to judge me is an all-knowing Lord. Happy me if I am found good in his sight! Think and say of me that I am a holy man; he who is to judge me is an all-seeing Lord. Woe to me if I am found wicked in his sight! "Therefore, fear him to whom everything is known;" fear that Judge who is an al-

mighty, and, at the same time, an all-seeing God, and who, when he shall judge us, shall be a God without mercy.

II. How can that be? A God, and without mercy? Is it possible to conceive the idea of a God without mercy? Does not the Catholic Church sing: "Oh, God, of whose mercy there is no measure, and of whose goodness the treasures are infinite"? Does not David call him often a God of mercy, a gracious God? "The Lord is gracious and merciful, patient, and plenteous in mercy. The Lord is sweet to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works." Does not St. Paul call him "the Father of mercies, the God of all comfort"? It is true, and therefore we often flatter ourselves that we need not fear being too presumptuous with him. But the mercy of God is only for the time of our lives here on earth; that time past, it has fulfilled its office and gives way to justice alone. Now, there is no sin so great that he is not ready to forgive at the first moment of repentance; but hereafter there will not be the least fault that he shall not examine and punish with all the strictness of his justice. Nothing shall remain unavenged (Ps. 74 : 3); every farthing must be paid; not an idle word shall be passed over or forgiven without satisfaction. Even the works of the just shall with difficulty be allowed to pass. "When I shall take a time," says the Lord, "I will judge justices."

And this is but right; the divine honor requires that a time should come in which the severity of his justice shall be made manifest, as his other perfections are shown to the world. In the creation God showed his almighty power; for with one word, fiat, he made the universe out of nothing. In the government of the world he shows his admirable wisdom, for his providence has appointed many different states for men to live in. In the Redemption he shows his goodness and mercy, for he offered himself as a Victim for the salvation of men, and was nailed to a cross for them, and the same mercy is daily made

manifest in the patience with which he bears with sinners. His boundless magnificence and liberality he shows in heaven, where every momentary good work shall reap an eternal reward; his hatred and detestation of sin are made evident in the eternal hell, where he punishes even a momentary mortal sin of thought. It is his justice alone that has not been exhibited to the world hitherto. And God has appointed the last day of the world as the time for showing that special perfection to men; and therefore he calls it: The great day of the Lord; the day of wrath; the bitter day; the day of calamity, on which he shall judge all nations in his justice.

The mercy of God itself requires that severity and merciless strictness in the judgment. Why? It has been and is still so often abused by men during life; and, what is still more insulting to this divine attribute, sinners take occasion from it to offend God with all the more hardihood. Thus countless millions of sins are committed because God is infinitely good and merciful. Is it not right, then, that this insulted mercy and goodness should be fully avenged on the presumption that so recklessly despised it? And that it will surely be. "I have always held my peace," says the Lord; "I have kept silence, I have been patient" (Is. 42 : 14); but when that time come, that great day of wrath and anger, I will show them what I am. "I will be to them as a lioness, as a leopard in the way of the Assyrians. I will meet them as a bear that is robbed of her whelps....and I will devour them as a lion" (Osee 33 : 7, 8). They will feel the heavy weight of my justice.

Ah, then we shall see the Son of man coming; then we shall all behold that almighty, all-wise God, but without mercy; just, angry and embittered! And how will it be with us then? What fear and trembling there will be among the wicked in presence of their Judge! Who can stand before him? I hear David, hurled from his throne by a disobedient son, abandoned and hunted by his own people, and wandering about in misery; but

I tremble at the same time when I hear him in the midst of his calamities calling out fervently to God, not for help and alleviation of his sufferings, but for grace in the day of judgment, and that, too, out of sheer fright. "Hear, oh, Lord, my prayer; give ear to my supplication in thy truth; hear me in thy justice!" And he adds the reason of his earnest supplications: "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight no man living shall be justified" (Ps. 142 : 1, 2).

I hear Job on the dung-hill crying out full of anguish and fear in the midst of his terrible sufferings: "What shall I do when God shall rise to judge? and when he shall examine, what shall I answer him?" (Job 31 : 14.) Answer: "My heart doth not reprehend me in all my life" (Job 27 : 6). Would to God that I could say that, too, of myself! Answer that after the loss of all thy goods, the slaying of thy children, in the torments thou hadst to suffer, thou hast never sinned with thy lips, wert always resigned to the divine will, and didst bless the name of the Lord. Answer that whatever small faults thou didst commit were most amply atoned for by thy generous alms, and by the sufferings thou didst bear with such patience. Ah, would that I could say that, too, of myself! Answer: "I was clad with justice. . . . I was an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame. I was the father of the poor," a comforter of the afflicted. And yet thou art afraid of the judgment of God, and dost not know what to do! Alas! let me and other sinners ask: "What shall we do?" I hear too a Saint Jerome, emaciated with penances, striking his breast with a stone, and crying out: "When I think of that day, my whole body trembles," and a death-sweat breaks out on my forehead! Whether I am eating or fasting, sleeping or praying, the sound of the terrible trumpet echoes in my ears: "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!"

Who will be safe in Babylon if Jerusalem is to be judged so strictly? If the pillars of the church tremble with fear, what is to become of the worm-eaten timbers? In a word, as St. Peter

says, "if the just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Pet. 4 : 18.) What are we to do? Must we lose courage altogether and despair of our salvation? No; for there is still time for grace, and since that is so we must at once appease our Judge with sincere repentance. Now, while the mercy of God surpasses all his works, let us cry out with a contrite heart in the words of the Catholic Church: "Oh, just Judge, forgive us our sins before the day of reckoning comes!" Now, while there is time for amendment we must make friends with our Judge by earnest, sincere repentance, by a thorough change of life, by true humility, by renouncing all vain earthly joys, and by the diligent practise of good works; so that when we shall one day see him coming in great power and majesty, we shall have reason to rejoice. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE SUDDENNESS WITH WHICH THE LAST DAY SHALL COME.

"*Make straight the way of the Lord.*"—John 1 : 23.

And what is to happen after all those signs and portents? "Then they shall see the Son of man;" then the last day shall come, and Jesus Christ in his majesty and glory shall appear in the valley of Josaphat to judge the living and the dead. But when? Immediately after those signs, or a long time after? Who can tell us that? It is useless to ask, for no one knows it. All we know for certain about the matter is that

I. The last day of judgment shall come upon men quite suddenly and unexpectedly.

II. Therefore we should be ready for it every hour of our lives.

I. There have been many holy friends of God to whom he revealed the day, nay, even the hour, of their death; there have been wicked sinners the time of whose death and eternal damnation has been foretold by the prophets. The heavenly city of Jerusalem was shown to St. John the Evangelist. St. Paul was rapt up to the third heaven, where he saw mysteries that may not be revealed to men. Jesus Christ often spoke to his disciples about the kingdom of God, about the indescribable joys that there awaited them as the reward of their labors: "I have called you friends," he says to them, "because all things whatsoever I have heard of my Father I have made known to you" (Mark 15 : 15). But concerning the time of the end of the world and the coming of the Judge, no one either in heaven or on earth has ever heard a word. "Of that day or hour," says our Lord expressly to his disciples after having told them of the signs that are to announce the last day, "no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father" (Mark 13 : 32). With these words he restrained the curiosity of his disciples regarding the time of the general judgment, as if he said to them: why should you desire to know what is hidden from the angels and even from the Son of man himself? These words are to be understood in this way: The Son of man knows nothing about the last day, not that he is absolutely ignorant of it, but that he does not wish to reveal it to any creature; that is, he has not of it a knowledge that he can communicate to others. In the same way a priest, if asked what such or such a one has said to him in confession, can with truth answer: I do not know. For in such circumstances the words mean simply: I do not know it by a knowledge that I can com-

municate to others; or else: I am as little at liberty to speak of it as if I were absolutely ignorant of it. Hence the knowledge of the time of the last day is kept most strictly from men, and therefore that day will come quite unexpectedly, and will fall upon men when they are least thinking of it.

Christ has foretold that he will come unexpectedly: "For as lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even unto the west : so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matt. 24 : 27). Lightning, as we know, appears suddenly and before one is aware of it; it shoots out of the clouds and flashes before our eyes; "so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." He will appear to men before they have time to cast a thought on his coming. St. Peter says: "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief." A thief would never dare to break into a house when he knows the inhabitants to be on their guard. No; he who is robbed is not aware of it until he finds his things gone. Like a thief in the night, the day of the Lord shall come unexpectedly.

Finally, the same truth is confirmed by the similes used by our Lord to describe the manner in which the men of those times shall live: "And as it came to pass in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man." And how did people act then? "They did eat and drink; they married wives and were given in marriage until the day that Noe entered into the ark." And what then? "And the flood came, and destroyed them all." Wonderful was the blindness and stupidity of the men of those days; not the least attention did they pay to the oft-repeated warnings of Noe. He was a hundred years engaged in building the ark; the people went to see his work; they doubtless asked him what the huge structure was intended for; why it contained so many divisions, rooms, partitions, and stables. Noe said to them: do penance; sin no more; appease the anger of God; in a few years the whole world shall be destroyed, for the waters shall ascend higher than the highest

mountain, and there shall not be dry land enough left for a little bird to stand on; therefore be converted to God. Oh, fool that you are! they said to him; who put that nonsense into your head? Why do you plague yourself so with that useless labor? Enjoy yourself as we do; eat, drink, and be merry. Meanwhile the time for the flood came; the sky was darkened; the clouds began to collect; the sea swelled up and encroached on the dry land. Poor mortals! do you still refuse to believe? Yes; they are not the least disturbed; they go on as before. They did nothing but eat, drink, dance, and sing; they had marriage-feasts, and sports, and enjoyed themselves to their hearts' content: "And the flood came, and destroyed them all;" while they were in the midst of their sins the flood-gates of heaven were opened, and the water swept them all away. "Likewise," continues the Evangelist, "as it came to pass in the days of Lot: They did eat and drink; they bought and sold; they planted and built; and in the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all."

"Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man shall be revealed" (Luke 17 : 30). Should we not think that so many signs would be enough to make the men of that time watchful? But no! When the fear and terror caused by the signs shall be at an end, they shall resume their former mode of life, and when they least expect it, "in the twinkling of an eye," fire shall fall from heaven and reduce the world to ashes, and then the dreadful trumpet shall resound in all places, and the angel's voice be heard crying out: "Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" And what conclusion are we to draw from this? "Make straight the way of the Lord;" therefore we should now prepare ourselves most carefully for that day.

II. After speaking of the uncertainty of the last day, and saying that no man nor angel knows anything about it, Christ adds: "Watch ye, therefore, because you know not what hour

your Lord will come" (Matt. 24 : 42). Be ready like to a householder who expects a thief to break in, and knows not when he will come. "Watch ye, therefore." "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch" (Mark 13 : 37); prepare yourselves for my coming; do penance for your sins; order your lives so now that when the Judge comes he may find you in the state of sanctifying grace; otherwise the fire that consumes your bodies shall be only a prelude to the eternal flames of hell.

Very probably we shall not live till the last day. But, although the world may last for another thousand years, it behooves each one of us to be always on guard, and to prepare most carefully, so that all may go well with us in the general judgment; for in whatsoever state of life the end shall find each one, in that state, too, shall the last day of the world find him; for as a man dies, so shall he be judged on the last day. If we die in the state of grace we need not fear judgment, but rather rejoice at it; the kingdom of heaven, the society of the elect, is surely open to us. If we die in the state of sin we have nothing good to hope for on the last day; the fire of hell among the reprobate is and will be our lot forever. Therefore the judgment that awaits us on the last day depends on our death and the last day of our lives; hence, as we should always be prepared for that day, so, too, should we be always ready for the hour of death. Now, who can tell us when that hour shall come, or where it shall find us? God alone knows that; to no purpose should we expect a messenger to be sent to warn us. We know not whether it will be after ten or twenty years, to-day or to-morrow, or even in this very hour. One thing we know, and that is that the Lord has warned us and all men: "Wherefore be you also ready: because at what hour you know not the Son of man will come" (Matt. 24 : 44). In the hour when you are not thinking of it death will come and take you out of the world before the tribunal of God to the particular judgment, and what-

ever sentence you receive then and no other shall be the one you shall hear in the general judgment.

Therefore, the conclusion is evident: every one of us who values his soul and its salvation should and must now be ready for the coming of the Judge. And I say, "be ready;" for it will be too late to begin to prepare when the Judge knocks at the door; and it will be forever too late. "Watch, therefore," our Lord says, "because you know not what hour your Lord will come." And as you cannot know it, be on your guard at all times; keep in the friendship of God; let no one dare to remain even a quarter of an hour at enmity with him in the state of mortal sin; for perhaps during that quarter of an hour death may come unexpectedly and hurry you off to the judgment-seat. "If the good man of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would certainly watch, and would not suffer his house to be broken open" (Matt. 24 : 42, 43). And if we knew the hour of our death, would any one of us be so reckless as not to repent of his sins beforehand and be reconciled to God? But since we do not know that hour, and since any hour may be our last, we must be at all times intent on this important business and be ready for the long journey into eternity. "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin."

No one should trust to his youth, and say: Oh, I am not old yet; I am still young, strong, and healthy; I am not in danger of death; there is no hurry for me; I can begin later on to amend my life and prepare for death. Alas, that wretched later on! I am not old! I am still young! How many thousand souls have been hurled into hell by those excuses! Do you mean, then, that young people cannot die? But very few attain old age; most people die in their best years, and no one knows the hour when the Lord will come for him; so that young as well as old should be prepared at all times. You will amend later on, you say. What! exclaims St. Augustine, later on? He who thinks in that way deceives himself, and treats his

death as a joke. Consider the great risk of the last day, and what depends on it. Nothing less than eternal joys or eternal torments! It is no child's play! Is heaven such a trifle that it can be allowed to depend on an uncertain "later on"? Is hell a trifle, that the escaping it can be left to a "later on" that you know nothing about? Do you know what is said of that servant in the Gospel who puts off everything to a future time, thinking to himself: "My lord is long a-coming; I can meanwhile enjoy myself and make merry"? But how shall he fare? "The lord of that servant shall come in a day that he hopeth not, and at an hour that he knoweth not, and shall separate him, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

How old are you now? Fifteen, twenty, thirty, forty or more years? Shall you live a year longer? You cannot tell; this very day or hour you may be summoned before the tribunal of the Almighty. If that happened to you this day or hour, should you be ready? Is there anything on your conscience that you should first repent of and confess? If such is the case, oh, go to confession at once! Perhaps in another day or hour it may be too late! A whole eternity depends on this, and you cannot and will not burn forever with the demons in hell. You are fully determined with God's help to go to heaven and be happy there with God and his elect. Now, your eternity depends on your last hour, on the state in which it finds you. Therefore, be always ready for it. But, you think, these are sad and melancholy thoughts. Not by any means! They are full of consolation for the soul that is determined to work out its salvation; for it must be a great consolation for such a soul to find itself prepared at all times for death. These thoughts are indeed sad and melancholy for those who are not minded to amend; but they should think of the sad and melancholy meditations they will one day make in hell, when they think: I could have been eternally happy, but I did not wish to be so!

In future always keep before your mind your death and the judgment that awaits you. This will be a check on your evil inclinations and desires; it will spur on your sluggish will to zeal in the service of God; it will detach your heart and affections from earthly goods and pleasures; it will sweeten the short-lived trials of this uncertain life, so that you shall bear them with patience and resignation for his sake and to gain heaven; say to yourself: this cross may possibly last only for an hour, and then I shall go to my God and possess him in eternal joys. Daily live as if you had daily to die, to appear before his judgment-seat. In the morning when you awake make such a resolution as you should make if you knew that at evening your body was to be lying dead in the coffin; and at night, before retiring to rest, purify your conscience as if you expected to be found dead in your bed next morning. Thus you shall be ready any moment to meet your future Judge, whenever it may please him to call you from the world; and you shall meet him not with fear or terror, but with joy and consolation, confident in his promise that at the general judgment you shall be among the elect on his right hand in the valley of Josaphat, and shall hear the joyful invitation: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE JUDGE AS MAN.

"*And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*"—Luke 3 : 6.

The Son of man, Jesus Christ, is to be our Judge on the last day, the day of general judgment, when all flesh shall rise from the grave. If so, why did I in a former sermon cause such alarm to myself and you by representing our Judge as a strict and merciless God? He is man, like to us, and has loved us even unto death. So it is, dear Christians. Rejoice, for we have a good Judge; our case will be tried under favorable circumstances. Rejoice, then, pious Christians, who by your virtuous lives remain always in the friendship of your Judge. But sinners, alas! as far as you are concerned, you have just as much reason to fear as ever unless you turn from your evil ways. He who will judge us is Jesus Christ, a Man like ourselves, that is true; but the sinner has no less reason for fear on that account.

I. Because the Man who will judge us shall then be quite different toward the sinner from what he now is.

II. Because the sinner who is to be judged shall then be unworthy of pity or mercy from his Judge.

I. Amongst all the titles that are given to our Lord in the Gospels there is none more common than "the Son of man." He himself hardly ever speaks of himself otherwise than as "the Son of man." Why? To show that, as he had assumed our mortal nature, and become man like to us, he has also taken on himself the same tenderness, sensibility, and mildness which

urge men to have compassion on those who are suffering. And truly there never was and never will be a man so mild and compassionate, so friendly and meek, as Jesus Christ, the Son of man—that is, of Mary. The holy precursor St. John cried out as soon as he saw him: "Behold the Lamb of God!" What is meeker or milder than a lamb, in which there is no guile? When the Prophets describe the future Messias they all give that as the first mark by which he is to be known—his mildness. "He shall not cry," says Isaias, "neither shall his voice be heard abroad." He will not even open his mouth to speak in a loud voice. He will be a Man, says David, "that hath no reproofs in his mouth." "He shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer," says Isaias again, "and he shall not open his mouth."

Of his own virtues, Christ proposes for our special imitation his meekness and humility. "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart." What else has his whole life been but the constant practise of meekness? When did he ever show the least anger or indignation, except in the case of the Scribes and Pharisees, when there was question of his Father's honor? What patience did he not show in his daily intercourse with his disciples, who were still very ignorant and full of imperfections? How friendly and lovingly did he not deal even with the worst sinners, without ever upbraiding them for their wickedness? How often did he not prove the sensibility of his heart for the woes of others, when he met with people who were afflicted and in trouble; when he actually mingled his tears with theirs? Not a single word of complaint did he utter even in his cruel Passion against his torturers, but rather prayed for them while he was hanging on the cross, and begged of his heavenly Father to forgive them. And to prove still clearer that he has the greatest love and affection for us, he calls himself our Friend, our Father, our Brother, our Spouse. To give hope and courage to sinners, he says that he is their Pledge, their Advocate, their Mediator with his angry Father; that he is the

Intercessor between God and man to repair all that is broken. "There is one God," says St. Paul, "and one Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all" (1 Tim. 2 : 5, 6). Oh, sinner! hear the consoling words of St. John: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ." No matter how great your sins are, do not despair; have good hope and courage, for we have as our Advocate the only begotten Son of the Eternal Father, who has gone bail for us, and offered himself as full atonement: "And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2 : 1, 2).

So that we might imagine we have no reason to fear him as Judge. But he shall then be quite changed toward the sinner. All his mildness and tenderness shall be turned into severity and bitterness; all his pity into sternness; all his meekness into anger and indignation, when you shall behold him coming in his power and glory. All the titles he has assumed out of love for men shall then be no longer used by him; it will not then be said of him: "Behold the Lamb of God; behold him who taketh away the sins of the world" (John 1 : 20), but rather: behold "a lion ravening and roaring" (Ps. 21 : 14), who comes to devour his enemies!

Alas, how different that is to what he used to say! "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19 : 10). Yes, that was true; but it is so no longer; the Man has changed. How often he has said: "Go, then, and learn what this meaneth: I will have mercy and not sacrifice. For I am not come to call the just, but sinners" (Matt. 9 : 13). True, such was the case then; but it is so no longer; now I am come to judge the living and the dead; now I am come to call the just to heaven, and to condemn the wicked to the everlasting flames of hell. You yourselves, oh, sinners, must acknowledge that when the crime in question is clearly proven and the perpetrator of it convicted, and he himself confesses his guilt,

and when, moreover, the crime is clearly one that deserves the gallows, then there is no longer place for grace or mercy; the judge has no power to pardon, but is forced to sentence the criminal according to the rigor of the law, even if it were his own son whom he has to condemn to the extreme penalty. Now, on that day, when the great account-book is opened, in which all our thoughts, words, and actions are written down; when, moreover, the consciences of all men shall be laid bare before heaven and earth; when, besides, as we all know, the divine law condemns to hell all who are found guilty of mortal sin that they have not blotted out during life by sincere repentance, what else can the Son of man as the Judge of all men, appointed to that office by his heavenly Father—what else can he do but punish the guilty according to the strictness of the law? All the circumstances of the case are evident, and nothing remains but to pronounce the terrible sentence: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25 : 41). If a judge appointed by the sovereign has not the power of showing mercy to the convicted criminal, yet we know that that power is held and is often used by the sovereign himself. Now, the Son of man is the King of kings, and the only law-giver. Can he not, then, respite a poor mortal in this case, and save him from eternal torments, or at least sentence him to a milder form of punishment? No! "I am the Lord, and I change not" (Malach. 3 : 6). I am the Lord, and never retract from what I have once uttered: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away," nor be frustrated. And suppose that our Lord could change his law, and as supreme Judge show mercy on the last day; to whom should he show it? To the sinner who departs this life without repentance? But for what reason? There must be some motive to urge the Judge to be merciful in such a case. And no such motive is at hand; for the sinner

who is to be condemned shall then be utterly unworthy of any favor or mercy from his Judge.

II. There are three motives which can move the judge to pity, or justify the sovereign in dispensing the poor criminal from suffering the extreme penalty of the law. First, when the crime is committed through accident or misfortune, without deliberation and for the first time. In such a case something is accorded to human weakness; for instance, if a man who is otherwise peaceably inclined happens to be overcome by drink, and in a fit of passion plunges his sword into the bosom of his friend. Hardly is the crime committed when he bewails his unfortunate friend with bitter tears, and actually gives himself up to justice, acknowledging that he deserves death. All agree that a homicide of that kind deserves compassion, and should be treated far more leniently than one who is always on the lookout for quarrels, and deliberately attacks a man and kills him. The crime of the first was due to sheer misfortune; that of the second to malice. Again, if the guilty person is of importance in the country, or of a good family, or nearly related to the judge himself, he is generally dealt with more mildly, or even released altogether from punishment. But if he is a stranger, unknown, a bad character, caught amongst the hedges and ditches, and convicted of crime, then there is no mercy for him. Thirdly, the sovereign is often moved to pity and pardon, or at least to mitigate the sentence of one who has the tears of his wife and children, or the favor of some powerful man to intercede for him. None of these shall avail the sinner before Christ, because he has sinned wilfully and maliciously. Did the sinner not know, not firmly believe that the same God has strictly forbidden each and every mortal sin under pain of eternal damnation? And in spite of all this he has not restrained himself, but of his own free will, with full deliberation, for some wretched thing, to gratify his senses, to make some

trifling profit, to please a mortal creature, he has accomplished the sinful act.

Because he had examples enough of people who were condemned for having sinned. Millions of Angels sinned only by a momentary thought, and at once, without mercy, without having a minute granted them for repentance, like lightning they were hurled by divine justice into the abyss of hell. Our forefather Adam sinned against the divine command by eating one mouthful of an apple, and he was at once turned out of Paradise and condemned to eternal death with all his posterity. We still feel and suffer the hard punishments of this first sin; to atone for it the God of infinite justice and mercy allowed his only Son to be crucified on the gibbet of the cross, and cruelly put to death. Countless human beings have been condemned to hell for their sins, and they are burning there now and will burn forever. And yet it has not had the slightest influence on us; we have sinned without hesitation, shame, or fear. Can such guilt be attributed to mere misfortune? Can it be called deserving of mercy or pity?

And how could we lay the blame of our sins on human weakness if we remained in them without doing penance? It is true that a man sometimes commits a sin on account of a very alluring occasion, or because he gives way to temptation through the violence of his evil passions and inclinations; but after the sin he enters into himself, repents, and heartily detests the guilty action. Such a case indeed deserves pity, and can well be ascribed to human weakness; for "to sin is human, but to persist in sin diabolical." But not to rise again after the fall, to remain in sin for a long time, to put off repentance and wilfully expose one's self to danger while death is liable to surprise one at any moment, and bring with it eternal damnation; that indeed is devilish, nay, worse than devilish, for the demons have never had a moment granted them in which to repent. And is not this the very state of him who dies in mortal sin?

Could such a man lay any claim to pity, mercy, or grace from the Judge whom he has despised?

After death the sinner is no longer related to Christ. All we human beings are members of the same Head, and therefore we must sympathize with the misfortunes of our fellow-men, as St. Paul says: "If one member suffer anything, all the members suffer with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members of member" (1 Cor. 12 : 26, 27). As long as a Christian is in this life he is one of the members of Jesus Christ, from whose mystic body he is, so to speak, never separated, as long as he does not apostatize from the true faith; therefore on account of that relationship Christ is always full of pity for even the greatest and most wicked sinners. But after death all relationship is broken off, and the sinner is not merely a rotten member, but is actually and completely separated from the body of Christ. Now an amputated foot, as we know, cannot cause pain; it may rot and be thrown out on the dung-hill, like any other piece of carrion. "Depart from me, you cursed," shall our Lord say to the reprobate; you are condemned and cast off; I know you no more; you will never have part with me, and therefore I have not and cannot have any pity for you in your eternal misery.

Finally, where are the patrons, the petitions, the sighs and appeals for mercy? Where are the tears that should flow on the last day to implore pardon for the sinner? Unhappy sinner, look around you and see if there is any one to put in a word for you with your Judge! Look up! See Mary the Mother of mercy, the Refuge of sinners; she can do anything with her divine Son; perhaps she may help you. Look up and see the great hosts of Saints, friends and children of God; can they do something for you? Alas, a vain hope! They, too, know you no longer! And there is no one, then, to implore the mercy of the Judge for him? No; not one. But, on the contrary, many voices shall be raised to embitter the Judge's anger.

Your own soul shall cry out against your body and say: this is the wretch that has slain me with its impure desires and love of luxury! And the body will cry out against the soul: this is the wretch that has conceded so much to my sensuality, and not held me in check by its reason, as it should have done. Children shall cry out against their father and mother: my parents are the murderers of my soul; they should have brought me up to thy service, oh, Judge, but they neglected their duty and taught me nothing but the vanity and sinful customs of the world. Your wife shall accuse you of having treated her worse than a servant, and of having spent what belonged to her in drinking and debauchery, so that she had to suffer hunger with her children. All these will cry out in the words of the Apocalypse: "How long, oh, Lord! (holy and true) dost thou not judge and revenge our blood?"

From this we may conclude what sort of a sentence he has to expect on the last day who dies in the state of sin, and whether he has any reason to hope for grace or mercy from the otherwise meek and gentle Son of man. Oh, truly! neither the Judge, who will then be quite changed from what he now is, shall feel the least pity for the sinner, nor shall the latter have the least title to mercy. Amen.

Sunday After Christmas.

THE HAPPY END OF OUR YEARS.

"*When the fulness of the time was come.*"—Gal. 4 : 4.

These words have been used and will be used of all men as long as the world lasts. Thus with the child the fulness of time may come in two or three years; that is the end of its years.

The fulness of time for the youth or maiden may be in ten or twenty years, for the man or woman in thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty years; then comes the end of their years. The same words shall one day be used of us too; but we cannot say how many years must elapse till then. Happy shall we be if the end of our years is a happy one. And that is what I wish myself, you, and every one from my heart at the end of this year. Namely, I do not wish in the common mode of expression, a happy end of the present year and beginning of the next, but I wish for you and myself:

I. A happy end of our years; the object of this wish is a happy death.

II. That it can and should be realized by every one, and how that is to be done.

I. Friends generally wish one another many years of life and happiness on this day; but I speak of the end of your years. Do I then wish you to die? That is a thing that most men cannot think of without fear and trembling; a thing that is looked on generally in the world as the most terrible of all. For then we must separate from all men, leave all that we loved in the world, and thus, stripped of everything, go into the unknown land of a long eternity. My wish is a melancholy one. I repeat it, and wish you and myself from my heart a happy end of our years. I wish to each one the end of his years, but a happy end; I wish you death, but a happy death, and one that shall not come until the years of life determined for each one by the all-wise providence of God shall be accomplished; then I wish you a just, holy, and happy end of your life, that your death may be precious in the sight of God and of his Saints. Could I desire anything better for you than this? Is there anything in the world more important for us than a good and happy end to our lives? For what else do we live and spend our lives in this world than that we may die well and happily?

At the end we must leave all things; but what is the value of all that trumpery if we receive eternal goods instead? The loss of a dollar is a grievous one for a poor workman who has a wife and children to feed, and to rob him even of that small amount is as much as to condemn him to fast for the whole day; yet if the good man was sure of gaining a hundred dollars for the one dollar, would he much regret the loss of it, or be very unwilling to pardon the thief who stole it from him? No, indeed! he would be only too glad to suffer such a loss every day on similar conditions. We readily suffer an old coat to be torn if we hope to get a new one in place of it. Now, what is it that we must leave behind us on earth, when we come to the end of life? The most precious thing of all that death takes from us is life, and that is very short, uncertain, and inconstant. St. James compares it to a vapor that is seen for a time and suddenly disappears. It is a life of misery and suffering: "Man born of a woman, living for a short time, is filled with many miseries."

What else is taken from us by death? He who dies has been either a poor or a rich man. If he has been poor, he leaves nothing he need trouble about. He who has nothing can lose nothing. Has he been rich? Then, though his wealth was enormous, and, like Solomon, he had all the pleasures of the world, he has to bid good-by to everything; but what is that to him if he has lived piously and has a happy end? What is all he has left compared to what will be given to him in eternity?

We love the world, and have a natural inclination to love it more than we love God, although he is our true Father, from whom we receive everything, and from whom we expect an eternal inheritance in heaven. What is the cause of that? Because we have but a dim knowledge of God by faith. We acknowledge, indeed, that God is to be loved more than all the world can give us; we show this, too, in reality when we serve God and keep his commandments, and profess that we are will-

ing to lose all rather than offend him grievously; because we have been taught this from our youth upwards and have heard it so often. Yet, as far as the natural inclination is concerned, we fear and shudder at the idea of being separated from the world and its goods, no matter how worthless they are, and of going to our Father in heaven.

But when the eyes of the mind are properly opened for the first time at the end of life, then we shall see and know how wretched and miserable life is in this world. And he who dies a happy death will then be able to say with joy: oh, how vile the things I leave behind me; and how precious the treasures I am about to receive in exchange for them from the faithful God whom I have served! My money and all my possessions I willingly leave to those who are to come after me; I have brought nothing into the world, I shall take nothing out of it. But, oh, what happiness! In a short time I shall hear the joyful invitation of the Lord: "Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25 : 21).

I leave what I have hitherto loved: parents, children, friends, and relations; I have seen them for the last time in this mortal life; but, after all, that is no great hardship! For what delightful company awaits me in heaven in the many millions of angels, holy martyrs, confessors, and virgins, who rejoice together with the most perfect mutual love in God! I shall see Mary, the most pure virgin, my dearest Mother, whom I have so longed to behold; nay, I shall rejoice forever in the most intimate friendship of infinite beauty, God himself. I shall no longer see the light of the sun with my bodily eyes, nor have sensible experience of how my descendants shall fare on earth after my death; but everything that occurs in heaven and on earth I shall know and understand incomparably better by the beatific vision of God. My body, that has hitherto served my

soul as a sort of garment, and is torn by death, and the life that I have tried so hard to preserve by minding my health, these shall be taken from me; but neither is that a great hardship. For my soul shall be clad with the shining robe of glory and will live forever without fear of illness or fatigue. Farewell, then, oh, world, with all your fripperies! I leave you with joy! Go forth, my soul, from this emaciated, miserable body; leave it to the earth to be eaten by worms in the grave. The time shall come in which this very body shall rise up out of the dust in the general judgment, to be again united to thee, and to share forever in thy eternal joys. Good-by to everything on earth! My banishment is at an end; the business of my life happily accomplished; I am going to the land of joys, where it shall be always well with me! See the end of your years that I wish each and every one of you from my heart. Such an end we can all have if we only strive for it earnestly, no matter what our state or condition; that we may all do this is the wish I shall briefly express.

II. I say to you, married people, parents, fathers and mothers! pay attention to these words of St. Augustine: "Know and understand that you are not Christians to think of this world alone, but to have your thoughts always fixed on the next life;" your sole care should not be as to how you can live and bring up your children, and clothe and feed them according to your station, but you are Christians especially that you may prepare for the next life. For that reason the supreme Lord of heaven and earth has placed you over your domestics as masters and mistresses, and over your children as parents, that you may so rule them and bring them up that not one of them may be lost at the end of his years through your fault. Ah, parents! think of it often, and think on it deeply: what a dreadful thing it would be for a loving father or mother to bring a child into the world that is to fall into the clutches of the devil at the end of his

days! And what should not parents do to avert such a dreadful calamity! And what a happiness it is for a loving father or mother to bring into the world a child that at the end of its days shall be brought by the Angels into heaven! What should not parents do to secure such happiness for their children! Make a resolution to work for a happy end of your years, and it will keep you up to your duty with regard to your children. Let the husband, then, often say to his wife, and parents to their children: Dear wife! we are now living together, but we know not for how long; the time shall come when we shall have to separate; one of us must go first and the other follow. But, wife, what a terrible thing it would be for us to be separated at the end of our years forever, for one to be in heaven and the other in hell! Children, if I have a happy end and you an unhappy one, what a terrible separation that would be! God has given us the means of living well and respectably; but how will that help us at the end if we do not now make good use of those means? If, on the other hand, we now suffer poverty, what worse shall we be for that at the end, if we only serve God truly in our want? Let us so live together that we may have a happy end, and rejoice together forever in heaven.

Young men and women, "remember thy last end" is the advice given each and every one of you (Ecclus. 7 : 9); in all your works, in all your days, think of what you would wish your last end to be. That thought will make you careful to avoid the occasions of sin, to keep away from dangerous places and company, to restrain the outward senses, and especially the eyes and ears, that you may do nothing even in thought or desire that could make your end unhappy. That thought will remind you to take timely council with God regarding your future state in life, and in the choice of that state, on which generally depends the happy or unhappy end of your years, not to be led by the senses or by what seems agreeable to you, but to consider what state is the most likely to make the end of your years

happy. In all doubts that occur to you, as to whether you should do this or that, or permit it, go to this or that place or company, act or not act according to this or that worldly fashion—in all such circumstances think of the end of your lives; ask yourselves: will this company, or conversation, or fashion bring me comfort on my deathbed, or make me more sure of heaven? or will it, on the other hand, perhaps increase my deathbed anguish?

Joy and consolation for you, widows and orphans, desolate, sorrowful, and afflicted Christians! Daniel, describing the many tribulations and afflictions that were to visit different peoples, adds: "And this until a time" (Dan. 11 : 24). Poor, oppressed souls! be patient and resigned to the will of God! What you are now enduring shall last only until a time; it will soon come to an end! Your poverty and want shall last only for a time; they will come to an end; your sighs and tears shall last only for a time: they shall come to an end; and if you keep always in the friendship of God it will be a most happy end. For there is no other way to heaven but the way of the cross, of penance, of mortification, of self-denial, of humiliation. Oh, with what joy will you be able to think on your deathbed: now I have suffered what God willed me to suffer; it is all over now, and I am going into heavenly, eternal joys that shall never end!

Sinners! you who are still in the state of sin, do you think you will be able to say the same on your deathbed at the end of your years? Truly you will then know how little is that which you now esteem so highly, for the sake of which you leave your God. It would be well for you if you had nothing to expect after death, if your souls were capable of crumbling into dust with your bodies! But where shall you go then? Alas! into poverty without end, into hunger and thirst without end, into wailing and gnashing of teeth without end, into hell without end, into that lake of burning pitch, into everlasting fire amongst the demons! See, that will infallibly be the end of

your years, if you finish your lives in the state in which you are now. Will you persist in that state? Ah, no! Rather make the resolution with the new year to begin a new life. Then I confidently promise you what I wish from my heart: a happy end of our years! Amen.

First Sunday After Epiphany.

THE JUDGE AS OUR MODEL.

"*And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace, with God and men.*"—Luke 2 : 52.

Jesus was true Man, and a Man like to us in all things, sin alone excepted. He grew up as we do. "When he was twelve years old" his parents, Mary and Joseph, lost him, just as a little child is lost in a large town or in a great crowd of people, and cannot find its way home again. He increased in age, understanding, and wisdom, just as all men are wont to become wiser as they advance in years. "He advanced in wisdom and age." Although in the very moment of his conception he was infinite wisdom and holiness, yet he increased in those; that is, he gave more outward evidences of wisdom and holiness in order to serve as a Pattern for all, that we, by following his example, may advance daily in grace and virtue before God. Hitherto we have considered Jesus our future Judge as God and as Man, and in both cases we have had to confess that he will be an exceedingly terrible Judge for the sinner; for as Judge he will be a God without mercy, and as a Man he shall become quite changed and without pity. There is still another circumstance connected with the same Judge which is not less terrible, namely that he is a man like ourslves.

To be judged by Christ, a Man like ourselves, shall be a source of the most terrible pain for the sinner.

To insure the conviction of a criminal, so that he will not have a word to say against it, there is no better means than to appoint one to try him who is either of the same standing and condition, or otherwise has known the accused for a long time, and is well acquainted with his manner of life and the various wiles he employs to carry out his plans. Now, Christ is Man, and because Christ is Man, like us, the sinner's judgment shall be all the more severe. Why so? Because the sinner, to his great shame, shall be irrefutably convinced that he could and should have led a better life. If we heard the sentence of condemnation from God alone, on account of having transgressed his commands, we should be indeed convinced that we should have kept the commandments; but since that same sentence shall come from the lips of the incarnate God, it will convince us that we could easily have kept the commandments. Before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, a Man like to ourselves and subject to the law as we are, before such a Judge, what excuse could we put forward? The example he gave us in our own nature shall close our lips and clearly prove to us that we could and should have kept the divine commandments and lived according to them.

Christ will confound and convict the sinner by his examples. Imagine that you hear the dread sound of the last trumpet calling you before the tribunal of this Man: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment! "Give an account of thy stewardship" (Luke 16 : 2). Where did you get the audacity with which you wantonly trampled me under foot? Who has given you the courage to persecute and insult even to death me, your Creator, your Redeemer, your Sovereign Benefactor? Give an account! Answer me! Now sigh forth again: Ah, Lord, remember that I am a poor mortal, clothed with flesh, and subject to many

weaknesses and frailties! Thy law was altogether too hard for me, and therefore thou shouldst forgive me for not having observed it! What! the Judge will reply, am I a stock or a stone? Am I not a Man like you, and clothed with flesh as you are? It is true that as Man I could not sin because I had a full knowledge of the Godhead which was united to my humanity; but were you obliged to sin because you were at liberty to do so? Was my grace, my help, ever wanting to you? Was it not always ready to assist your weakness in temptations?

You still try to excuse yourself, proud man! I, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth, have not disdained to become like to you; but you, wretched worm of earth, were ashamed to resemble me. I took the form of a servant to teach you humility: "Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart;" but you have not been content to remain in the limits of the station allotted you. I have worn during my whole life a poor garment; but nothing could content you but a costly dress, with which you did make a display before the world. I came to serve others; but you were filled with anger if anything happened to be wanting to your comfort. I have prostrated myself on the ground in prayer to my heavenly Father; but you, even in church, in my very presence, did refuse to bend both knees, although you could bow and scrape easily enough before a mortal. Where is your excuse? Have you anything to allege in your favor? "Tell if you have anything to justify yourself."

Oh, unjust man! Were my commandments too difficult for you because you were a weak mortal? Then look at me, your Model, a Man like to you. I, to whom heaven and earth belong, have become poor in order to show you the way to heaven. I was so poor that I could not point out a foot of land as belonging to me during my whole life; I was poorer than the birds in their nests, the foxes in their holes; I had not even a stone whereon to lay my head; naked I lay in the crib, and

naked I hung on the cross; but you were not content with what I so generously bestowed on you. Your greed for gold was insatiable, and to gratify it you have had recourse to dishonest means, and have robbed your neighbor. You have lived in luxury, and when I came before you in the persons of my poor brothers and sisters you have not given me a farthing. You have gratified your gluttony, indulged in immoderate drinking and gambling, conformed to the vain customs of the world, and given away money enough to the object of your sinful passions. What excuse have you? Your weakness? As if I did not know you, nor ever experienced in myself what a man can do and bear! "Tell if thou hast anything to justify thyself."

Come, impure man! wanton, dissolute woman! whose god was your corruptible body, whose thoughts and imaginations were filled with foul pictures, with a thousand sinful desires, with unlawful looks and touches, and other shameful things that may not be named, and who were occupied in such filth day and night; look at me and see what a man can suffer! See the cross, the nails, the thorns; they condemn thy fastidiousness. See this mouth which so often bore hunger and thirst, and spent forty days without food or drink; it condemns thy luxurious living. See my body gashed with the scourge, and the still open wounds that cry out against your unchastity. I did not wish to enter into my glory except by the rude way of the thorns and the cross; and you have tried to enter heaven by a pleasant road strewn with roses! Where is your excuse? "Tell if you have anything to justify yourself."

Tepid, slothful Christian! you have disregarded many beautiful examples that might have helped you to do good and save your soul, and neglected them through sheer sloth; you have wasted many hours, weeks, and years in which you might have gained heaven at any moment; you have missed many Masses and sermons in which I could have brought you to the knowledge of your vices, to amend your life to greater zeal in my ser-

vice, and that you have done simply to indulge in sloth and love of sleep; you have consumed your precious time in eating, drinking, and gaming. Could you not have been more diligent and zealous? Have you not often heard that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away"? "Tell if thou hast anything to justify thyself."

Who shall be able to hear such a convincing Judge? Sedecias, the king of Israel who was taken prisoner by Nabuchodonosor, gives us a slight idea of the sad spectacle the sinner shall present when he appears before his insulted Judge to be put to shame. The city of Jerusalem was besieged and taken by the Assyrians; all the people took to flight, and Sedecias was captured, bound in chains, and brought to Babylon. There the unhappy king had to see his children slaughtered before the throne of Nabuchodonosor; his eyes were plucked out, and there was nothing more left him on earth to see or care for. Thus deprived of sight, childless, helpless, without consolation or hope, his most bitter torment and greatest shame was to know that he had to lie there a prisoner and slave to a king like himself, who was now his conqueror and sworn enemy. That was worse to him than his imprisonment, his blindness, nay, even than death itself! But still more unhappy are you, oh, sinner, if you have to stand with open eyes before a Man like yourself, and hear him convict you as your implacable Judge!

For the same Man, when he was taken prisoner in the garden, patient as he was then, by merely uttering the words, "I am he," so terrified the shameless rabble and fierce soldiers that they fell to the ground in fear. The same Man, when he showed a few rays of his beauty and glory to his disciples on Mount Thabor, although they knew him well and he was friendly disposed to them, filled them with dismay. The same Man, when he engaged in works of mercy and was healing the sick, frightened with one question the woman we read of in the Gospel of St. Mark: "A woman who was under an issue of blood

twelve years," says the Evangelist, "when she heard of Jesus, came in the crowd behind him and touched his garment," with the firm hope that she would be freed from her infirmity; meanwhile "Jesus, turning to the multitude, said: Who hath touched my garments?" Whereupon the poor woman fell to the ground in terror: "But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him."

If the mere voice of the then loving Saviour, when he was actually distributing his benefits, could inspire such fear, how will it be on that day when the same Man shall come in all his majesty and glory, surrounded by a thousand times a hundred thousand Angels, having laid aside all his mercy and compassion, and resembling a ravening lion in his wrath and anger? How will it be when he shall have the sinner bound before his throne, and shall speak to him in a terrible voice, upbraiding him with having neglected the example of his Saviour's most holy life? Oh, "who shall stand to see him?" Will you be able to do it, wicked Christian? Let the heavens thunder and send forth their lightnings on that day in the most awful manner; let the sun be darkened and turn day into night; let the moon lose her light and become blood-red; let the stars in confusion fall from the heavens, the sea roar and pass its bounds, and all the living things on earth grow mad with terror; all that will not frighten me so much as one look of that Man, Christ Jesus. Oh, that I may not have to face him! Hell would be more tolerable to me than the sight of that Man! "Who will grant me this, that thou mayest protect me in hell, and hide me till thy wrath pass?" Thus holy Job speaks in the person of the sinner before the sacred humanity of our Lord in the tribunal of judgment. "Who will grant me this, that thou mayest protect me in hell?" Eternal Father! protect me; hide me! What, accursed sinner! why should I protect thee? where should I hide thee? Ah, in hell! Let me go there! In hell? But that is the place of all imaginable pains and torments. No

matter! let me go there! Cover me with flames! Mountains, fall upon me in pity! Hills, bury me in your mercy! "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: fall upon us; and to the hills: cover us."

There you have your future Judge as God, your future Judge as Man; our Judge who, in whatever way you consider him, is all-seeing, and therefore nothing can be hidden from him; almighty, and no one can escape him; infinitely just, without mercy, without pity, without respect for persons, who will pronounce final sentence on each one according to his deserts. It is indeed on the last day of the world that the sentence will be made known which decides the eternal happiness or misery of each individual; but now during this life is the time in which the trial is going on; all that we now do, think, or say, we shall then see written in the great account-book; what we now sow we shall then reap. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels: and then will he render to every man according to his works" (Matt. 16 : 27). Ah, above all things let us do what we can to ensure a favorable termination to our suit. If we have sinned and sinned often, and grievously even, let us not despair on that account. As long as we are in this life we have time to regain what we have lost, and to wipe out our sins, so that they will not be brought up against us in the judgment.

Sinners! I have said nothing yet of the terrible sound of the final trumpet which shall summon the dead out of their graves; nothing of the examination that shall take place in the judgment; nothing of the accusers and witnesses; nothing of the public manifestation of consciences and the intolerable shame of sinners before the whole world; nothing of the final sentence that shall call the just to the kingdom of heaven and condemn the wicked to the fire of hell. I have hitherto spoken only of the Person of our future Judge, and this in itself is terrible enough, so that the bare remembrance of that Judge should fill

even the most pious with fear and anguish. But there is yet another point which to my mind is still more terrible. What is that? It is this, that, namely, after all that we have heard about our divine Judge and meditated about him, to conceive a greater horror of sin, nevertheless most people still persist in their old vicious ways: the unchaste return to their filthy pleasures, the blasphemers to their cursing, the uncharitable to their detraction, the drunkards to their intemperance, while the unjust refuse to make restitution, and the vindictive lay aside their hatred. Thus the sermons they hear about the divine justice only serve to make them more hardened in vice, and less excusable before the tribunal of the Almighty. Amen.

Second Sunday After Epiphany.

THE JUDGE AS OUR REDEEMER.

"*My hour is not yet come.*"—John 2 : 4.

Christ had determined to show his divinity to the world, and to confirm it during his life on earth by many miracles; but this was not to be done until the proper time came; then he began to change water into wine, to heal the sick, to cleanse lepers, to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and to raise the dead to life. Whoever asked him to perform such wonders before the time was answered in the words: "My hour is not yet come." He had determined for the salvation of mankind to give himself up to the rage of his enemies, to allow them to mock, scourge, crown him with thorns and nail him to the cross; but this was not to happen till the appointed time. The same Saviour has determined to revenge himself on his enemies, and to condemn wicked sinners to the eternal flames

of hell; but the hour appointed for that is not yet come. Now he bears many insults from them with the utmost patience; he shows himself to them as their Saviour and Redeemer; he is constantly offering them his grace, if at any moment they will only resolve to turn to him. But when his time comes he will appear with great power and majesty to judge the living and the dead. Sinners! do not wait till that hour of the Lord, for then that meek and gentle Saviour will pronounce the final sentence on you and condemn you to eternal damnation! Nay, he will condemn you all the more because he is your Saviour and Redeemer.

I. On account of his fidelity to you, which you have neglected.

II. On account of the love he has shown you, which you have despised.

I. Absalom, after having murdered his brother, was forced to fly; Joab, the general of the army, succeeded in reconciling him with his angry father, so that the latter recalled him, under the condition, however, that he was not to see him any more. But when that undutiful, disobedient son rebelled against his father and set fire to the field of Joab, he had no more determined enemy than that same Joab, who was before his warmest patron and advocate. Joab had neither rest nor peace until, even against the express command of David, he pierced the heart of Absalom with his lance. So fierce does anger become in one whose fidelity and friendship are despised.

The Mediator and Advocate between God and men is Christ: "One Mediator of God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all" (1 Tim. 2 : 5, 6). "My little children," writes St. John, "these things I write to you that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just, and he is the propitiation for our sins." Oh, sinner! how often have you not during your

life experienced his faithful and loving desire to help you? As often as you deliberately committed a mortal sin you made God your enemy, and deserved to be tortured in the terrible fire of hell forever. The sentence was already pronounced against you; your case was utterly lost as far as it depended on you; there was nothing more to be done but to carry out the sentence. And who saved you from that misery? Was it not Christ, who acted as your mediator and advocate when he lent you, as it were, in the holy Sacrament of Penance, the infinite merits of his Passion and death, and offered them up for you to his eternal Father, thus restoring you to the grace and friendship of God? And not only once did he do that for you, but perhaps numberless times. As often as you have fallen again into the sins you confessed, so often have you thrust Christ out of your heart, and said: "We will not have this man to reign over us." I will not have Christ as my Advocate; I do not want his intercession. Nevertheless that same Saviour has hitherto been your constant Friend, and he will remain your Friend as long as there is a breath in your body. But woe to you forever if you despise to the end this Friend, who will then become your sworn enemy, to avenge on you his slighted friendship and to act as your accuser. How does a man feel when a suit in which he is interested is left to the decision of a judge whom he has deeply offended, and who, as he knows, is his worst enemy? Ah, he would think, now there is no hope for me! Yet in worldly judgments there is some way of escaping out of a difficulty like that, by refusing to have such a one as judge on account of his partiality and hostility, and appealing to another whose decision will be unbiased. Try that, oh, sinner! when you come before the divine tribunal, and there see Jesus Christ, whom you have outraged and made your enemy; tell him that you will not have him as your Judge; that you appeal to another because you know that he is not favorably inclined to you. But your appeals and protestations will be of

little service to you. That same Jesus Christ and no other will be your Judge, and will decide your fate for all eternity. Alas! what will be your feelings then?

What was the consternation of the brethren of Joseph when they found that he had become viceroy of Egypt, and heard him say those few words: "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold" (Gen. 14 : 4). He does not say: I am Joseph, your lord and judge, and you are my prisoners: your lives are in my hands. He did not upbraid them with their former cruelty toward him, nor say to them: Do you remember how you acted to me when I implored your mercy on bended knees, with streaming eyes, and you put me into a pit, and then sold me, like a dumb beast, into Egypt? I am now your lord and you cannot escape me, and I am able to take what revenge I please for the injury you have done me. No; that was not necessary to touch their hearts. The few, sweet words, "I am Joseph, your brother," were enough to fill them with dismay, although he spoke them with the greatest tenderness and with tears of affection. "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt. Be not afraid, and let it not seem to you a hard case that you sold me into these countries: for God sent me before you into Egypt for your preservation. Yet his brethren could not answer him, being struck with great fear" (Gen. 14 : 3-5).

Hear the voice of your brother, oh, sinners! when he shall cite you before his tribunal, and says to you: "Do you know me now? I am Jesus, whom you insulted." And these words he shall then pronounce, not with a smiling, friendly countenance, or with tears of tenderness, like Joseph, but he will call them out with a terrible voice so that all the world may hear. I am Jesus, he will cry out, who meant so well with you, but whom you have rejected and persecuted! I am Jesus, whom you, vile worm of the earth, have despised; whom you have abused; whom you have so daringly provoked to anger! Here I am now, and you stand before me. I am Jesus; do you know

me now? But I know you well! I am he for whom you lost all respect in church, to whom you were ashamed to bend your knees because you knew that I was hidden under the humble appearance of bread! I am he whose holy name you have often invoked as a witness of your falsehood. I am he whom you have so often sold for a piece of money, a vain breath of popular favor, a brutal pleasure! I am he who created you for the sole purpose of serving me, and you have misused me as your servant in the most shameful actions. I am Jesus, the Judge of the living and the dead, the Lord and Master of a twofold, long eternity; I am not now your meek and gentle Redeemer and merciful God, but your merciless, but just, and inexorable Judge.

II. The greater the love has been, the greater the anger and hatred that replace it. This comes partly from the fact that a great anger is required to overcome great love, and to effect such a change in the heart that it cherishes no thoughts but those of hatred and revenge against him who was before the object of its sincere affection; and partly because love, when it is scorned and insulted, embitters hatred and anger by the remembrance of the proofs of friendship that were offered to the beloved person, and of the insults that the latter returned for them.

Suppose that a nobleman is very fond of the bride whom he has espoused a short time ago; he returns home after being absent for a whole day and finds her in the act of being unfaithful to him. What a blow that is to him! It seems to turn all the blood in his body into poison! His hand moves spontaneously to his sword to draw it and take vengeance on the guilty one, but the thought of the divine law restrains him; he swallows his rage as best he can and runs off to his king, to whom he confides the secret of the shame he has suffered, and from whom he demands punishment on the adulteress. "Yes," says the

king, "I see how badly you have been treated; go now and deal with this matter as you think fit; I invest you with full power to examine into the case, to pronounce sentence, and to inflict punishment." Now, imagine that you are present and see the first meeting of the injured husband and the faithless wife. How his eyes seem to dart fire at her! How she is ready to die with shame and confusion! And how terribly these or similar words resound in her ears: I am your husband, who loved you, shameless wanton that you are, more than my own life; I am the husband to whom you vowed fidelity and love, but you have shamefully broken your plighted troth. Have I deserved this from you? Have I ever given you cause to treat me so? Am I not good enough for you? But now I am your judge, and your life is in my hands! The mere sound of those words should be enough to cause the faithless wife to die of fear.

The love of Christ for men is unspeakably great; and all the greater shall the fear of the sinner be when he shall be upbraided with this love. Where shall I hide for shame? he will say; where run to for fear if I die without repenting of the sins with which I have so wantonly broken faith with this Bridegroom, and have to appear before him when he, filled with anger at my infidelity, shall come as my Judge, invested with full power to avenge himself on me? How the words shall resound in my ears, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh." How fearful to hear the voice of him who loved me saying: Adulterous soul, I am Jesus! I am your Bridegroom and Judge, whose honor you have grossly injured! Not once, but often, have I caught you in the act of being unfaithful to the promise you made me on oath in Baptism. I have often forgiven you, and, forgetting the insults received from you, have readmitted you to my love and friendship. But you have rejected me in spite of all! Adulterous soul! have I deserved that from you? What harm have I ever done you? Have I ever given you the least occasion to desert me and go over to others? "What is there

that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it?" What better proofs could I have given you of my love? For the sake of a piece of land or a little money you sold me, who had prepared for you boundless riches and endless delights. To no purpose, then, has my love for you brought me down on earth and nailed me to the cross! To no purpose have I instituted the holy Sacrament of Penance to cleanse you from your sins, and prepared the heavenly Food, my own flesh and blood, to unite your heart with mine! To no purpose have I sent my preachers to urge you to amend your life and to call you to my eternal inheritance! To no purpose have I visited you with trials and crosses that you might enter into yourself, and see what a loving Spouse you had lost! To no purpose have I shown you so many sudden deaths and terrible examples that fear might at last force you to love me! "What is there that I ought to do more that I have not done?"

Would that we often thought of the coming judgment! Would that the thought of it inspired us with the resolution of earnestly amending our vicious or imperfect lives! Ah, let us take deeply to heart and often consider this: if I cannot bear a word of reproof from a mortal like myself, how shall I be able hereafter to endure the bitter upbraidings of the slighted love of my future Judge, Jesus Christ? And, moreover, how many fine promises have I not made to my confessor? how many firm resolutions in secret before God to avoid sin, to shun the dangerous occasions of it, to give up the bad habit of detraction, cursing, and swearing, and to reform my life thoroughly and serve God more zealously in future? But what shall be said about all this at the last day? Fine promises! beautiful resolutions! See how that man has kept his word! He was just as careless as ever after confession; he remained in the old occasion of sin; he was just as avaricious, unjust, intemperate, unchaste, proud, vindictive, and godless as before. How could you bear to hear such reproofs in the presence of Christ and his

Angels? Oh, no! you could never endure them! And therefore, now, at last, this very day, you should get rid of the load of your sins, and serve God faithfully.

How is it that we make so little to-do about the last judgment? The reason is because we imagine that day to be still far away from us, and therefore we think there is no cause to be afraid of it. But how long do you imagine it will be before that day comes? We need not expect to have to wait for many centuries before the world is reduced to ashes and the last trumpet summons the dead out of their graves to appear before the tribunal of the Almighty in the valley of Josaphat. The day of death will be for each one the day of his particular judgment, in which he shall appear before the same Judge and hear final sentence pronounced on him. Is death, then, so very far away from us? Can we foretell the time in which we shall die? May it not be this very day? Ah, how stupid we are and senseless in what concerns our eternal salvation! Why do we not stir ourselves now, before it is too late, and make use of the faithful service and intercession that Christ, our well-meaning Friend, Advocate, and Arbiter with the angry God, has promised in our behalf if we are only firmly resolved to avoid sin and amend our lives? Why do we not begin at once to love that most amiable lover of souls?

Sinners! I pity you, if, more than the dead, who will rise from their graves at the sound of the last trumpet, you stop your ears to my words, or rather to the words that God speaks to you by my mouth, and if in spite of the consideration of the final catastrophe which shall cause all nature to shudder you still remain in your old sins; if you refuse now to hearken to my words, which are intended only for your good and to induce you to amend your lives, you must hereafter hear another voice —that of your Judge—who will speak to you of nothing but your eternal reprobation and damnation! Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE SUMMONING OF THE DEAD TO JUDGMENT.

"And I say to you that many shall come from the east and the west."—Matt. 8 : 11.

They will come from the east and the west, but what a vast difference there shall be between them! Some shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while others shall be cast into the exterior darkness. When shall this coming, this crisis take place? On the last day, when Jesus Christ shall summon all mankind from the four quarters of the globe before his tribunal, to judge every one according to his works. We have already considered the Judge as God, as Man, as our Saviour, and as our Model. But in a judgment there are many persons besides the judge: there is the accused, who is cited before the tribunal; there is the chief question on which he is to be tried; there are the assessors, who examine the case; there are the accusers and witnesses, and finally there is the sentence pronounced by the judge, which either absolves or condemns the accused. All these circumstances are a source of consolation for the just, but a terror for the wicked. The summoning of the accused before the tribunal is the subject of this day's meditation, which shall consist in the answer to this one question:

Who are those who shall be summoned? All men, without exception.

1. Faith tells us that all men shall be summoned to judg-

ment. To prove that we and all mankind shall be summoned before the tribunal of the Almighty nothing more is necessary than the words of our Lord himself, the divine Judge: "When the Son of man shall come in his majesty, and all the Angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty: and all nations shall be gathered together before him" (Matt. 25 : 31, 32). All, without exception, from every country in the world; great and small, rich and poor, men and women, all who have ever lived on earth shall meet there. In the four quarters of the globe shall be heard the awful sound of that trumpet which re-echoed in the ears of St. Jerome day and night: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!

Now I wish to place before your mental vision a spectacle of terror and surprising change. Quick, ye angels! Heavenly messengers, blow the trumpets! Sun, be darkened! Moon, hide thy light! Stars, fall down from heaven! Skies, send down the fiery rain! Everything on earth must be burnt up and reduced to ashes! Now, angels, sound the call: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment! Behold, says St. Paul, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Cor. 15 : 52), the graves shall all be opened, the mouldering bones shall come together, each soul shall enter into its body, "the dead shall rise again incorruptible" (Ibid.). The dead shall come forth living. What an awful spectacle! In earthly judgments the accused is warned some time beforehand, and a certain day is fixed for the hearing of his case, so that he may be able to prepare for it. But here all is to happen in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, without any forewarning; when the summons comes the accused must appear. In earthly tribunals the accused is allowed to bring his advocate with him, to speak for him and plead his cause as best he may; here each one shall have to appear alone and speak for himself and answer the questions put to him. Here one man is as good as another, as far as respect for persons is concerned. "He shall separate them

one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep," that is, the just, "on his right hand, but the goats," that is, the wicked, "on his left" (Matt. 25 : 32, 33).

What a great change shall take place in many minds when the dead shall arise out of their graves and hear the trumpet that summons them to the tribunal! Just souls! what a joyful sound that will be for you! To you alone does our Lord say the words: "When these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads: because your redemption is at hand." Arise, ye dead! These words, pious Christians, shall bring nothing but joy to you; they will be the loving invitation of the Spouse to his bride: "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come, for winter is now past, the rain is over and gone" (Cant. 2 : 10, 11). Come, and thou shalt be crowned!

Arise, ye dead! Arise, wicked sinners! Arise, you proud and ambitious man, you unjust, avaricious man, you impure adulterer, you drunkard, you vindictive man, you blasphemer, you curser, you vain, sensual man! Arise, slothful, wicked servant, and come to judgment! Imagine the feelings of a criminal who, on awakening in the morning, sees, to his great surprise, the executioner awaiting him with the rope in his hand, ready to lead him to the gallows. Some have suddenly become gray with terror when they heard the bell toll as the signal for their execution.

Wicked Christian! woe to you if, more deaf than the mouldering bones which at the sound of the trumpet shall rise at once out of their graves, you close your ears to my voice, or rather to the voice of God, who speaks to you by my mouth! Woe to you if the meditation on that dreadful day, in which all nature shall be disturbed and men shall wither away with fear, does not inspire you with a salutary fear, and with the resolution of at last amending your sinful life! But if you now refuse to listen to me, who am only saying what is for your eternal

salvation, you will one day against your will have to hear that terrible voice whose only utterance for you will be the sentence of your eternal damnation. Therefore I advise you, in the words of St. Paul: "Rise thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead" (Ephes. 5 :14); arise and put on the mourning garments of true contrition for your sins, so that when the trumpet calls out: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment! you may arise with joy and exultation to eternal life.

2. Again, what a change shall take place in the minds of many, of the just on one side and of the wicked on the other, when the souls of both shall rejoin their bodies, which in the case of the former shall be glorified, angelically beautiful, and brighter than the sun; but in the case of the latter, deformed, hideous, and exhaling a foul odor. With what joy will not the souls of the just welcome their bodies and lead them into everlasting happiness! Come, the just soul shall say; come, my dear companion, and share in my glory which thou hast helped me to gain! Come, now, and let us enter together into the joys of heaven, where we shall never be separated from each other again! And, on the other hand, with what horror, with what curses and blasphemies, the soul of the reprobate shall rejoin its foul carrion and drag it down to eternal flames! Accursed body! the soul shall say; how can I remain united to this putrid mass for all eternity? Art thou that sink of corruption that I have so much loved and petted? for whose pleasure I have lost the glory of heaven that I was created for? For thy sake, that thou mightest enjoy thyself and live in luxury, I am lost forever! Accursed soul! the body shall exclaim, thou shouldst with reason have held me better in check, and refused me what was bad and injurious for me! Oh, rather let me lie in the grave, consumed with worms, than accompany thee to hell!

3. What a change there will be in the minds of many when all mankind shall behold themselves huddled together without

any respect for persons: kings and princes with lowly peasants, high-born ladies with vulgar kitchen-maids—all assembled before the judgment-seat of God, as St. John says in the Apocalypse: "I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne!"(Apoc. 22 : 12.) You must not think that on that day people will pay no heed to rank and privilege, and that the proud, after suffering the humiliations that shall then be common to all sinners, will not feel the confusion to which they shall be subjected. No! On the contrary, the wicked, as they left this world with their bad passions and inclinations in full vigor, shall rise again from the dead with the same passions; the proud man shall have his pride and ambition as formerly; the impatient man shall still feel all the rancor of his ill-humor; the passionate man shall be still subject to his feelings of rage; and hence what despair shall possess them when they see themselves so humiliated, despised, mocked at, and rejected by those over whom they were so much exalted during life! Piso, a noble Roman, was led before the judge, clad in a shabby robe, to be tried for some offence of which he was accused; seeing the people staring at him, some in scorn, others with pity, he felt so keenly the humiliation of being thus degraded before the common herd that he drew a dagger which he had concealed under his cloak, and in a fit of passion stabbed himself to the heart. The consideration of this truth should now help us to practise true Christian humility. If one is inclined to think too much of the rank that exalts him above others, he should say to himself: on that day there will be no question of rank, and who knows whether I shall not have to take my place even amongst the lowest?

4. The same thought should bring consolation to you, pious Christians, who are content with the will of God, although you are poor, desolate, despised, humiliated! Your trials shall last only for a time, and a very short time; and on the last day everything shall be changed, just as it is in a mirror. Look at your-

selves for once in the glass; not for the sake of gratifying your vanity, in which useless occupation much precious time is often lost, but for the sake of learning a salutary lesson for the good of your souls. You will see your person represented therein as you stand, but with this difference: that your right hand shall be on the left side in the mirror, and your left hand on the right side; then think to yourselves: here in this life I am on the left hand, rejected, looked on as not worth anything, nay, hardly looked at at all, while others and even the wicked are held in high esteem. Thy will be done, oh, God! I can wait till thy great day comes, when thou shalt exhibit our lives to the whole world as in a glass; then we shall find our places changed.

5. Finally, what a great change shall take place in the minds of many when the separation shall be made according to the words: "The Angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just!" (Matt. 13 : 30.) Wicked man! the Angels shall say, what are you doing here amongst the sheep of Christ? Away with you! This is no place for you! You belong to the reprobate goats. Alas, how bitter and full of confusion shall then be the separation of one friend from another, of one acquaintance from another, of one fellow-countryman from another, of one neighbor from another, of one member of a household from another! One shall be on the right hand, the other on the left. "Then two shall be in the field," says our Lord, two who have worked together their lives long; "one shall be taken, and one shall be left" (Matt. 24 : 40). Two are living in the same house; "one shall be taken and one shall be left:" one shall be on the right, the other on the left hand. Two are in the same occupation; one of them shall be on the right, the other on the left hand. Two in the same family; one of them shall be on the right, the other on the left; the wife, for instance, on the right, the husband on the left; the father amongst the sheep, the son amongst the goats; the daughter amongst the Angels, the mother amongst the devils; the sister amongst

the elect, the brother amongst the reprobate; the scholar amongst the pious, the teacher amongst the wicked; a layman amongst the Saints, a priest amongst the accursed; the penitent amongst the blessed, the confessor amongst the damned; the hearers in heaven, the preacher in hell, or quite the reverse. Alas, I think, be this as it may, the separation will be a sorrowful one for the unlucky part, the change terrible!

Ah, where shall we be? On what side shall we stand? Shall we all be at the right hand? May God grant it! And, if so, how we shall rejoice with and congratulate each other! Shall some of us be at the left hand? God save each and every one of us from such a fate! If any were so unfortunate, how pitifully they would look at their former companions, from whose society they are now excluded! Say now to yourselves: Now is the time to choose and prepare the place in which we shall wish to be on that day. We are all horrified at the idea of being on the left hand, and we all wish to be on the right. Then let us rise up from this meditation, which we shall often make, especially in the time of temptation and danger of being led into sin—let us rise with the firm determination to serve zealously with our whole hearts, for the uncertain time that still remains to us, our God, who is worthy of all our love; to be obedient sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd and follow it, and never on any account to commit a wilful sin, for that alone is able to place us amongst the accursed goats on that day! Such is our unanimous resolution, is it not? And with God's help we will keep it, so that when the trumpet calls us to the last judgment we shall be all together, to our great joy and mutual happiness, at the right hand of the Judge, and not one of us on the left. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE EXAMINATION OF THE SINNER IN JUDGMENT.

"But the men wondered, saying: Who is this, for even the winds and the sea obey him?"—Matt. 8 : 27.

The same question shall one day be put to us: Who is this? Where does he belong to? To heaven or to hell? Woe to us if the answer we give is not a favorable one for our salvation! The examination of man in the judgment is the subject of to-day's meditation.

I. Each one of us shall be examined in the judgment; oh, what answer shall many be able to make?

II. The question and answer shall be given before the whole world.

In the judgment we shall be questioned about all we have thought during our lives. "The books were opened, and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Apoc. 22 : 12). All the secrets of men's hearts and consciences shall then be displayed in a most vivid light. "Give an account of thy stewardship" (Luke 16 : 2), shall be said to each one. Come here, oh, man! give an account of all that has occurred in your household during the time of your life. Account for the thoughts that were in your mind! Thought is free, we generally say; no worldly jurisdiction has any control over it, not even the Church herself, unless one reveals his thoughts to her. God has reserved this right to himself alone: "The Lord is the weigher of spirits" (Prov. 16 : 2). What filth shall then come forth from the hearts

of many who now show no mark of it on their foreheads! All the envious, hateful, angry, vindictive, suspicious, rash-judging thoughts you entertained against your neighbor; all the vain, self-conceited, ambitious thoughts with which you flattered yourself: your beauty, or your skill; all the unclean thoughts, desires, and longings that you kept in your mind about unmarried or married persons, the desires you had that others should have an unlawful passion for you; all the impure emotions you experienced in wilfully looking at another person; in assisting at an immodest play; in looking at an unchaste picture, all these things you will have to answer for in order, and confess when, how often, and how long you were guilty of them.

"Give an account:" answer for all the words that you have heard and said during your life; how many imprecations and curses; how many words of abuse and invective, of sarcasm and contention you have spoken against others; how often you have injured Christian charity and your neighbor's reputation by talking, fault-finding, tale-bearing, and detraction; how often you have disturbed the peace between friends and relations, brothers and sisters, husband and wife, by carrying stories backward and forward; how often you have indulged in or wilfully listened to impure conversation, or sullied your own purity and that of others by indecent allusions, double-meaning expressions, and unchaste songs and discourses; how often you have taught others to sin, and instructed the innocent in things they should never have learned; how often you have taken false and unnecessary oaths, or made false promises; how often you have told injurious, deliberate, or jocose lies; how often you have boasted of yourself or of your sins in the company of others; nay, how often you have spoken idly and to no purpose. Alas! what account shall we be able to give for our idle words, and what shall we be able to say about the sinful words we have uttered? Yet our Lord tells us: "I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak they shall render an account for

it in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12 : 36, 37).

"Give an account;" answer for all the actions of your whole life; what evil you have committed alone, with others, in secret, publicly, in youth, in manhood and age, up to the last moment of your life? What evil have you done at home, in that room, in that garden, on that walk, in that street, in that hidden corner? What injustice, impurity, intemperance have you been guilty of against yourself, against your neighbor, against God and his commandments, with eyes, ears, mouth, hands, feet? Ah, how will you be able to account for all these things? But one day you will have to do it. Give an account of all the sins you have caused others to commit or given occasion to by advice, command, approval, toleration, flattery, allurement, deceit, bad example, indecency in behavior, manner, dress, conversation.

Give an account; answer for all that you have omitted during your life that you could and should have done. It is not enough to abstain from what God has forbidden; one is also obliged to do what he has commanded, and will be questioned about the one as well as about the other. For instance, the Judge will not condemn you for having robbed your neighbor and stolen his property, but he will condemn you for not having helped the poor according to your means: "I was hungry and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me not to drink." He will not condemn you for having taken away your neighbor's reputation, but he will condemn you for having encouraged uncharitable remarks by your silence or your approval, and for not having stopped them when you might have done so.

Give an account: answer for all the years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, moments that you have lived on earth. Now you have lived for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy

years; how have you employed all that time? For your eternal salvation, for which alone they were given to you? or for your eternal damnation? How much time have you spent uselessly in play, amusements, and other triflings? In what manner, to what purpose have you during all that time employed the natural goods bestowed on you by God: your health, your money and wealth? How have you used the gifts of grace? What profit have you derived from the use of the Sacraments, the many opportunities of doing good that were given to you in preference to others, the many sermons you heard or might have heard if your slothfulness had not prevented you, the many examples of pious Christians who walked before you on the path of virtue?

Give an account: answer even for all the good works you have done in the course of your life. Of what kind were they? "When I shall take a time," says the Lord, "I will judge justices." Now bring forward your good works, your prayers, fasting, alms-giving, hearing of Mass, confessions, Communions, mortifications, works of mercy and charity, the daily duties of your state of life. Perhaps you have a great heap of them; but answer and say whether they were always performed in a proper manner, with due devotion and zeal, as becomes a Christian? Oh, how many of them you will find to have proceeded from a bad source: from hypocrisy, vainglory, and self-complacency! How many were performed without the good intention, without being directed to God, out of human respect, through a natural taste, or self-love? How many were without all zeal and devotion, attention, and reverence: tepid, cold, distracted, performed negligently? If all these faulty good works that deserve punishment rather than reward are separated from the remainder of your justices, how many shall then remain?

II. Now I bring you in thought into an amphitheatre infinitely greater and vaster than any that the Romans and heath-

ens ever saw in Rome. Imagine that you see above in the clouds Jesus Christ, the Judge of the living and the dead, surrounded by countless armies of Angels, as Daniel foretold: "Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him" (Dan. 7 : 10). Beside him stands Mary, the Queen of heaven; all the Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles and Martyrs are seated around in choirs as assessors; below are legions of devils, who, as executioners of divine justice, await the sentence of the Judge, panting like bloodhounds meanwhile with eagerness. On the right hand are the just in their brightness and glory; on the left the wicked all in confusion, like goats driven together in a disorderly flock. In the midst of these on the public stage is brought forward the sinner to hear and answer for all his wicked actions. What do you think will be his feelings on the occasion?

In their presence, says the Lord: "I will discover thy shame, and will show thy nakedness to the nations, and thy shame to kingdoms. And I will cast abomination upon thee, and will disgrace thee, and will make an example of thee" (Nahum 3 : 5, 6). Shall, then, all that you have thought, spoken and done be made manifest there? Yes; I will discover it all. Even what you have done in the dark night, in hidden corners, and tried to keep from the knowledge of every one? I will discover it; all shall be made manifest. Even those sins that filled you with shame when you were committing them alone? Even those that you should die with shame to be barely suspected of? Even those that you would not reveal to your dearest friend to escape death? Shall all those be made manifest? Yes! I will discover them all to the whole world; they shall be seen written on your forehead, with all their circumstances, the place, the time, the number, the intention you had when committing them. "Thou didst it secretly," said the Lord to David by his prophet, of the adultery he had committed, and the same

shall be said to all sinners; thou hast secretly caused Urias to be murdered, and taken Bethsabee to wife that no one might suspect thy guilt; "but I will do this thing in the sight of all Israel, and in the sight of the sun" (2 Kings 12 : 12) thy shame shall be made known to the whole world.

If any one in the world was ever put to great shame it was surely the case with the ambassadors of David, who were ill-treated by the Ammonite king Hanon, who caused their heads to be shorn as if they were slaves, their beards and their garments to be half cut away as if they were fools, and in this shameful guise he had them brought into his court to be made the laughing-stock of his courtiers and ministers; he then had them led through the streets through a great crowd of people who were staring at them. They must have been so ashamed that they hardly knew where to turn their eyes, and they would certainly have preferred to have their heads cut off by the executioner than to be thus treated. Honorable maidens of this city! if one of you, whose fair fame has hitherto been unsullied, were convicted of having given birth to an illegitimate child, and publicly pilloried, or had to stand this morning at the door of the parish church, clad in white, with a candle in her hand, so that all the people should see her, what would you think of that? Would you not rather die than suffer such ignominy? A young woman through foolish passion sinned against holy purity, and no sooner did she notice that she could not conceal the fruits of her sin than, filled with fear of the shame that threatened her, she ran at once to her lover and begged of him on her knees to help her to make away with herself, as she could not bear the shame of having her crime made known; the man agreed, gave her poison, and sent her soul to hell. Unhappy soul! you chose rather to suffer the eternal torments of hell than to have your sin known in only one town! But what is that, Christians, compared to the confusion of the sinner at the last day? Do you understand the exceeding greatness of it?

For that very girl and every impenitent sinner, shorn and ragged like the ambassadors of David, shall stand in the pillory surrounded by demons, and that, too, not in the sight of one town, but before all men, Angels, and devils, and all their most secret crimes shall be made public.

Oh, terrible day of confusion and despair! Think, although it is a small matter compared to the other instances we have considered, of the feelings of one who has to tell a shameful sin in confession. The confessional then seems to him nothing but a rack to torture him; his blood stagnates; his heart beats violently; his color changes; he stammers, and can hardly get out the words. I have——, the tongue falters, and he is covered with a cold perspiration. But why does he get into such a state? What is he afraid of? Ah, I need not ask; he has a single sin to disclose to his father confessor, and that is quite enough to fill him with shame and anguish. Oh, my God! if the disclosure of a sin in the privacy of the confessional can cause such shame, how will it be when all sins shall be made known to the whole world? If it frightens one to tell his sins to a priest, who is dumb; to a priest, who often does not know him nor has ever seen him; to a priest, who listens to him with all charity and friendliness, speaks to him gently, and rejoices that a lost sheep has returned to the fold of Christ; to a priest, who will give him absolution from his sins: how will it be if those sins have to be made known to the whole world, before heaven and earth, not that they may be pardoned, but that the sinner may be sentenced to eternal damnation?

Suppose that an angel, to whom all our thoughts are known, stood here in my place in this pulpit. (Let each one now think of the sin of which he is most ashamed.) The angel begins to call out the name of every one in a clear voice; that man has done so and so at such a time; that woman has lived in such a manner; that gentleman whom you see there has committed adultery in that house with that person; that wife has been un-

faithful; that young woman has impure desires and has sullied her chastity; that servant has robbed his master; that maid her mistress; and so on, calling out all the sins each one is guilty of: what would many a one do in such a case? How they would hide under the benches in shame and try to conceal themselves! How quickly would they try to get away, and run out of the church lest it should come to their turn to have their names called out! There are indeed many of us here together, but what is that compared to the population of the whole city? What is it compared to the population of the whole world at this present moment? What is it compared to the vast hosts of Angels, devils, and men who ever lived, are living, and shall live on earth till the last day? Oh, my God! I think, if I cannot bear to have my shame disclosed before a handful of people who cannot condemn me on account of my sins, how shall I bear it on the last day before heaven and earth? How shall all sinners bear to have their vices made known to all their friends, relations, acquaintances, and to strangers as well? The husband shall then know the vices of his wife; the wife those of her husband; parents shall find out the hidden crimes of their children, and children those of their parents; I and all men shall know what you have done wrong. See, they will say; who would have thought it of that person, who seemed to be so good and pious? How different he seems now to what we imagined him to be! Now we know what those people are! Ah, it was the fear of this shame that suggested to holy Job that terrible wish: "Who will grant me this, that thou mayest protect me in hell, and hide me till thy wrath pass," so that no human eye may see me? It is the dread of this shame that will force the wicked to cry out to the lifeless stones to cover them: "Then shall they begin to say to the mountains: fall upon us! and to the hills: cover us!" Ye demons, hurry us off at once to hell, that we may escape such intolerable shame!

Oh, how foolish we are to seek so diligently to hide our

wickedness, and to sin so recklessly when we have the opportunity of doing so, in the dark, or in a room where no one can see us! For everything shall be made known in the minutest detail to the whole world by the all-knowing God himself. Go on, then, you wicked deceiver! continue to hide your abominations through shame as long as you may, to conceal sins in confession, and to palliate and excuse them! What good will that be to you? Will you be able to do that on the last day, when the great account-book shall be opened? Ah, have common sense; think of what you are doing! Open your mouth and disclose your sins candidly in a much more merciful tribunal: in the holy Sacrament of Penance, and repent of your wickedness! Henceforth have a still greater horror of all sin, and fear nothing more than to offend God deliberately, lest that intolerable shame should fall to your lot on the last day. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE ACCUSATION OF THE CRIMINAL IN THE JUDGMENT.

"*Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn.*"—Matt. 13 : 30.

The cockle signifies the wicked; the wheat the just. The reaper is death. The place in which the cockle is to be burnt is hell. The barn where the wheat is to be gathered is heaven. The time in which the cockle is to be publicly tied in bundles to burn, and the wheat gathered into heaven, is the day of the general judgment. If we look at the fields in the springtime we see weeds of different colors—white, red, yellow, blue, coming forth like the most beautiful flowers and adorning the whole

field. But when the harvest-time comes the apparent flowers are seen to be but useless weeds, and what seemed to be grass is known now as the fruitful stalk that bears the nourishing food, and is carefully stored away. So it is in the world. If we consider the life of the wicked man, we find in it much pomp and splendor in dress, food, drink, sleep, gaming, amusements, pleasure-seeking, and luxury—things that worldly-minded people desire at least, if they cannot have them in reality. And if we consider the lives of the good, we see in them nothing but humility, modesty, temperance, watching, fasting, prayer, mortification, carrying the cross. But wait a while; let the day of judgment come, and what will become of worldlings then? Away with the useless weeds that have brought forth no fruit of good works! Away with them to the eternal fire! "Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn." But what shall become of the good wheat? "The wheat gather ye into my barn," because it has brought forth good fruit. On last Sunday we have seen how the criminal is examined in the judgment, and forced to answer, to his great shame and confusion. But even if he were to keep silent, and it were possible for him not to acknowledge his sins; if he might say: I have not done the evil things I am asked about, what would that help him? For he shall find accusers enough, and more than enough, to carry on the case against him, and to convict him beyond the shadow of a doubt: as I now proceed to show.

The criminal accused in the judgment.

When many credible witnesses testify against one accused of a great crime, he has a poor chance of escape. Now, think of this and tremble at the thought: Countless are the witnesses who shall appear against you to accuse you openly and convict you unanimously of guilt.

1. First there shall be swarms of demons from hell, moved by the bitterest hatred toward you. Even he who now tries to

inspire you with a presumptuous hope in the divine mercy will then beg of God to forget all his mercy. Even he who now paints sin to you as of little account and a mere trifle, will then bring forward all your sins in all their deformity. Even he who now tries to drive you to sin by his suggestions will then bring forward those very suggestions for your damnation, and accuse you of having listened to them. What shall he say? How shall he give testimony against us? The devil will recite before the tribunal of Christ the words of our profession, and the oath by which we bound ourselves in Baptism. You were asked whither you wished to go and what you desired. You answered by your godfather and godmother that you wished to be baptized and enrolled amongst the soldiers and followers of Christ. Then you were asked whether you renounced the world, the flesh, and the devil, and you answered: I renounce them; I give them up forever.

Now tell me how you have kept this promise during your life! Show me some sign that you have acted up to the holy profession you made that you were a soldier and follower of Christ? How often have you not been ashamed to show devotion and due respect and reverence to God in public, simply because such was not the custom of the world! How often have you not followed the example of others even against your conscience, because the world would have it so, in spite of the emphatic exhortation of Christ: "Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (1 John 11 : 15). "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12 : 2). Is that the way to renounce the world? If you had vowed in holy Baptism to observe perpetual fidelity and obedience to the world and its luxury, could you have fulfilled that vow better and more exactly than by your past conduct?

You promised also to renounce the flesh and all its concupiscences. And how have you kept that promise? Say when

did you fulfil your obligation in that respect? In your childhood, when you first commenced to know what the sin of impurity is? In your youth, when you knew enough of it by experience? The sinful thoughts, desires, wishes, conversations, letters, allurements, words, and actions that resemble those of a dumb beast rather than of a reasoning being—all these things show how you have observed your act of renunciation. Finally, you have renounced the devil; I renounce the devil and all his works, you said. But, says the devil, you have done me little harm; if you had signed a document promising to follow me in all things, I could not have expected more from you than what you have done to please me; you have at once consented to my temptations, nay, sometimes done more evil than I hoped for from you; I have advised you to curse and swear, but you have gone beyond that and blasphemed God; I have told you to hate your enemy and wish ill to him, and you have really done him harm; I told you to get drunk, and you committed impurity besides; I suggested unchaste thoughts to you that you might take pleasure in them, and you have actually committed the sinful action; I would have been content with your own soul, but by your allurements, seductions, scandal, and bad example you have brought hundreds of souls into my hands; you have done my will in all things as if you were my servant or slave; have I, perhaps, treated you so well and been so kind to you while you were serving me that you had reason to renounce God and adhere to me so faithfully? Oh, how I have embittered you for the short and mean pleasures that you owe to me! I have sent you a worm to gnaw your heart and torture your conscience; the money you procured by my help cost you a world of trouble and anxiety.

2. Yet these accusations shall proceed only from a bitter hatred. There shall be others, inspired by just indignation and by a love of justice, that shall be brought against you on that day. For complaints shall be made by all those, whether they

are amongst the elect or the reprobate, who have been unjustly treated or injured by you during life, whom you have harmed in their honor, health, or temporal goods. Justice, oh, God! they cry out; here is the wretch who wronged us and cheated us out of our property! He it is who in that suit, in which we should not have failed to obtain our rights, forced us to accept a compromise by which we were defrauded wholly or in part of what belonged to us! This is the miser who wronged us by not paying the wages due to us for our hard work, or by delaying to pay us, or by unjustly lessening the salary agreed on, so that we had to suffer the pangs of hunger! This is the merciless husband who treated me, his wife, as if I were a servant-maid or a dog, so that I was almost reduced to despair, and spent my life in continual sorrow and affliction! This is that inhuman father who brought us, his children, to the extremity of poverty by his constant gambling and drinking, and by the idle, worthless life he led! This is the unprincipled wretch who by all sorts of tricks, lies, and bribes, deprived us of our employment and of our good name, that he might do a service to others! This is the avaricious man at whose door we have so often knocked in vain to ask for a piece of bread! Oh, just Judge, pronounce sentence! And if the Judge shall hear the complaints of those whom you have injured only in their worldly substance, in transitory things, how much more loudly will not resound in his ears the cries for vengeance of those whom you have injured in their immortal souls, in eternal goods? What bitter complaints shall then be made against you by those to whom you have given occasion of sin by impure solicitations, love-letters, unchaste songs, and conversations? by the children whom you have taught to swear and curse, and to indulge in vanity? by the servants whom you have kept in your house for unlawful purposes?

3. All the holy guardian Angels accuse their own charges, and demand their reprobation from the Judge. Every one of

the Angels, says Origen, shall be present in the judgment to bring forward those who were the objects of his care, and he shall then make his accusation, stating the number of years he endeavored by his inspirations and warnings to encourage to good the soul entrusted to him, and keep it away from evil.

4. Even the Mother of God, and all pious Christians, shall accuse him. Refuge of sinners! Help of the desolate! Mary, Mother of mercy! thy very name fills my heart with sweet joy and consolation! Surely I shall have nothing to fear from thee, at all events? But, alas for a lost cause! If I die in the state of sin even thou shalt be among the number of my accusers. Sentence him, she will say, oh, just Son! Through me he could easily have been saved; through my hands went all the graces and blessings thou didst so generously bestow on him, but he rejected them. And a similar complaint will be made against me by all good Christians who have lived in the same town and house with me: We gave that man good example of the Christian virtues; we have shown him the narrow way that leads to heaven; he did not follow us, but went on the broad road that leads to hell. Such, too, shall be the testimony of the priests from the confessional: We have warned that man not to sin any more, but he kept on adding sin to sin; we begged him as gently as possible to leave that house, that person, to avoid the occasion of sin, saying to him that otherwise all his confessions would be of no avail, and that we dared not give him absolution, but he paid no attention to us; he promised, indeed, to do as we said, but his promises came to naught; he went from one confessor to another, and as the latter did not know the state of his conscience, nay, as he deliberately concealed it from him, he succeeded in obtaining absolution under a false promise of amendment.

Alas! whither shall I go? What shall become of the sinner in the midst of so many and such powerful, hostile, and embittered accusers, many of whom shall be in high favor with the

Judge? What shall I then say in that miserable position, outvoted on all sides; what shall I say in excuse? Ah, there will be no escape for me! Wherever I turn I shall find my case a lost one, my situation desperate, my sentence eternal damnation! But it is not come to that yet! Like the unjust steward, you know what to do. Sigh forth with the sorrowing Job: "Shall not the fewness of my days be ended shortly? Suffer me, therefore, that I may lament my sorrow a little before I go and return no more" (Job 20 : 21). Just Judge, grant me still a little time that I may go and repent of my sins, accuse myself of them, and seriously amend my life before that great and terrible day comes; so that when the accusers shall stand forth against me and call out for vengeance on me because of my sins, I may be able fearlessly and truthfully to answer: it is true, ye demons, ye saints and Angels, ye just and ye reprobate, ye Apostles and disciples of Christ! it is true that you have reason to accuse me; but it is true also that I have repented, that I have accused myself, that I have atoned for all, that I have amended my life and died a happy death. Thus all your accusations are repelled; my cause is justified and won; my eternal inheritance is with the just, who will joyfully await the Judge's sentence on me. If we are in need of doing so, let us observe this and do penance, and then we shall attain to the desired consummation. Amen.

Sixth Sunday After Epiphany.

THE CONVICTION OF THE CRIMINAL IN THE JUDGMENT.

"*I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world.*"—Matt. 13 : 35.

There is nothing so hidden in the hearts and consciences of men from the beginning of the world that our Lord shall not bring to light and speak out openly on that day when he shall come to judge the living and the dead. And not only shall the Judge do that; there shall also be many accusers to demand justice on the sinner. What will you do then, oh, sinner? Will you be able to deny your wickedness, or to excuse it against so many witnesses? Will you, perhaps, appeal to others? But where the accusers are so numerous no appeal can help. But do you still wish for other witnesses? Then, if so, you will find enough of them to convict you as clearly as the noonday sun of the crimes you shall be charged with; as I now intend to show.

I. The criminal will be convicted of having led a bad life, and therefore no denial will help him.

II. He will be convicted of having been able to lead a better life, and therefore no excuse will help him.

I. I cannot represent to myself better the sinner convicted of having led a vicious and criminal life than by considering the case of St. Peter in the court of the high-priest, warming himself with the servants at the fire. How he must have been embarrassed! A servant-maid who attended the door was the

first to attack him: "Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean. But he denied them all, saying: I know not what thou sayest" (Matt. 26 : 69, 70). A little later the servants came to him and said: "Art not thou also one of his disciples?" But Peter kept fast to his denial: "He denied it and said: I am not:" I know not the man, nor what you are speaking of. At last one came to him, saying: "Did not I see thee in the garden with him?" (John 18 : 25, 26.) There Peter was caught, and as it so happened the cock crew and he escaped.

Sinner! there you have a picture of what shall one day happen to you; but with this difference, that you will not, like Peter, be able to seek safety in flight. You will then be publicly accused of all your crimes, not merely before a few servants, but in the presence of all in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, and your accusers shall surround you in countless numbers. Are you not the man, they will say, the wretch who did, said, or thought this or that contrary to the law of the great God? Try now, if you can, to deny the charge; say: I am not; I know not what you are speaking of; I am innocent; and see if your efforts at deceit will be as successful then as they oftentimes are now when you hide your wickedness from the knowledge of men.

Those countless witnesses will cry out against you: "Did I not see thee?" Was I not present while you were actually committing the sin? Such shall be the evidence of all your companions and co-operators in sin, and they shall testify to the crimes you committed with others. Did I not see you? Were we not together in that house, that room, that garden, that deserted street, that hidden corner, on that day, that night when we did that wicked act together? The lifeless creatures that the sinner abused to offend God shall testify against him; they will accuse him of those sins that he committed in solitude by outward action. On that day the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon, the day and the night, and the whole world shall stand against us to convict us of our sins.

There is not the least need of witnesses, oh, sinner; your case is lost already without them if you leave this world in the state of mortal sin. You yourself shall be your own accuser; you shall convict yourself of your sins and vices, not only of those that you have committed with others, not only of those that you have committed in act and secretly, but also of those that no man, no creature whatever, could possibly know anything of except yourself, namely, of the inward sinful thoughts of your heart. Your own conscience shall be a witness against you: "Their conscience bearing witness to them," says St. Paul, "and their thoughts between themselves accusing, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men" (Rom. 2 : 15, 16). The book shall be produced in which all is written from which the world shall be judged. "The book spoken of," says St. Augustine, "is a certain divine force and intelligence which shall cause every one to recall to mind and to remember with a wonderful quickness all his works, whether they are good or evil." This is that truthful and infallible book that shall be opened before the eyes of all men, and cry out in a loud voice: "Did not I see you?" Did I not behold everything you have thought, said, or done, and see when, how, and where you did it? Have I not always experienced a pang of anguish whenever you acted contrary to the will of God and his commandments? From this conscience, says St. Bernard, all your sins shall spring forward like dogs let loose from the leash, and they shall seize you by the throat and cry out upon you as their author. Terrible it is to read what the Sacred Scriptures say of Sennacherib: after his whole army had been destroyed by the angel, he returned in shame and confusion, "and his sons that came out of his bowels slew him with the sword" (2 Paral. 32 : 21). Wicked Christian! what sort of children have you brought into the world during your life? Do you not know them? Come without having first done penance into the valley of Josaphat, when the angel's trumpet shall call you thither, and then

you shall see how they will rage and storm against you. The children of your head, your proud thoughts, in which you extolled yourself and lowered others; the children of your heart, those wicked thoughts and unlawful desires, that hatred and vindictiveness; the children of your eyes, those unchaste looks; the children of your tongue, that hateful, abominable conversation; the children of your hands, those acts of injustice, those impure touches—these shall all cry out against you: you have committed us! we are your works! Unhappy sinner! what excuse shall you make? Wherever you turn you are betrayed by other men, by all creatures, by yourself. There is no use in denial; you are fully convicted of having led a godless life. Nor is there any chance of making an available excuse, for it shall also be clearly proved that you might have lived much better and holier.

II. In nothing is our understanding quicker and more apt than in palliating and excusing our own faults and sins; it is most easy for us to find some way of either lessening or cloaking our own wickedness. Sometimes we put the blame on the Almighty, saying that it is he who gave us such strong inclinations for evil; sometimes we accuse our own weakness and frailty; sometimes others with whom we have to deal in the duties of our state, and in whose company we find daily occasions of sin; sometimes we blame our own ignorance or want of deliberation, and say: I knew no better; I did not think this or that was forbidden under pain of mortal sin. With these and similar excuses we try to persuade ourselves while here on earth that our sins are not so very grievous, and that God does not look on them as very wicked.

But bring those lame excuses with you on the judgment-day and see how they will serve to defend and protect you. Say to God; Oh, Lord, I am the work of thy hands; as thou hast made me, so I am; the violent inclination and proclivity to anger that

I experience every day; the impatience, avarice, impurity, and sensuality that I am subject to; the aversion I have to the cross, and to everything that is hard and bitter; the law of sin that always fights in my members against thy holy law—these things I have not given myself; I have received them from nature. What else, then, couldst thou have expected from a poor, weak mortal, such as thou has created me, but faults and sins? What! will you make the Almighty the author and cause of your wickedness? Bring witnesses here! Your own conscience will convict you of a lie. It is true that you came forth from the hands of your Creator with those violent passions? Were you always so wicked and inclined to evil, even before good fortune or the esteem of men turned your head? even before that senseless love hardened your heart? even before you learned to know the world properly? Were you like that forty, thirty, twenty years ago, and even in your first youth, in your early innocence? Can you not remember that you were then more inclined for devotion and the fear of the Lord, and that you were afraid of the very name of mortal sin? Why have you not been able to continue in those good dispositions, and to restrain and mortify, while still weak and almost dormant, the evil inclinations that afterwards showed themselves?

Let each one look into his own conscience, for it will be a book full of matter on the last day. There is hardly one of us who cannot remember having served God for some time or other during his life; no one who has not had some experience of the sweet repose of a good conscience; no one who has not tasted the consolation and joy of being free from all guilt and loving God above all things. Perhaps many a one when comparing his present with his past life will be compelled to sigh forth with shame: ah, beautiful life! where art thou? How modest and retiring I was then; how vain and haughty I am now! How pious and devout I was then; how tepid and slothful in the divine service now! How chaste and pure then; how

dissolute and unclean now! What shall I say when my conscience gives testimony of me before the tribunal of God? Shall I allege in excuse that my evil inclinations and corrupt nature did not allow me to live in better fashion? Ah, the innocence of my early years shall convict me of a lie, and prove beyond doubt that I might have lived better if I had only chosen to do so.

Can I appeal to the weakness and frailty that in the midst of so many dangers and opportunities of evil did not suffer me to offer resistance to temptation? Oh, a countless multitude of witnesses shall be there to put me and all sinners to shame in that case! It seems to me that I hear all the chosen saints of God crying out with one voice in the words of the prophet Job: "My strength is not the strength of stones, nor is my flesh of brass." What! Do you think we are made of granite, or of brass, or iron, like the statues you see of us? Our bones and relics that you honor on the altars show clearly enough that we were not Angels, but men, weak and frail like you, who had flesh and bodies like you. Look at the countless multitudes of every age and sex; the young boys, tender virgins, weak widows, who, in spite of the severest temptations and of many crosses and trials, remained chaste, patient, resigned to the divine will, and lived in a pious and holy manner. Could you not have done the same? If you know your own weakness and frailty, why did you rush so wantonly into the dangerous occasions of sin? Why did you not guard your senses more carefully? Why did you not humbly beg of God to protect you, as we did? No; away with your lame excuses! You could and should have led a better life!

And what answer shall I then make? Shall I throw the blame of my sins on my state of life, on my daily occupations, as most worldly people do? To excuse their sins and slothful lives some appeal to an unhappy marriage, others to the number of children and household cares they have to attend to,

others to the labor they have to undergo, to their riches, to their poverty. Is it then true that you have not been able to lead good lives nor to work out your salvation? But listen again to the countless multitude of witnesses who cry out against you from amongst the number of those who are on the right hand of the Judge—married and single, superiors and inferiors, courtiers, warriors, rich, poor, people of every condition and sex and station in life. All these will say to you: We have lived under the same conditions, in the same domestic circumstances, in the same office and employment, amidst the same worldly fashions and customs, yet we became holy, and are now eternally happy. Could not you have done as we did? We have lived in the world, in daily intercourse with worldly people, but we shunned the vain customs and laws of the world; why have you always adored them and taken them as the guide of your actions, although the Christian law was placed before your eyes as well as before ours, and the warning of the Apostle was for your good as well as ours: "Be not conformed to this world"?

Ah, what is to be done then? Shall I say: I knew no better at the time; I did not reflect on what I was doing? But that might avail a heathen, a Turk, a Jew, a wild barbarian brought up in savagery, who never heard a word of the Christian Gospel, of the commandments of God, of the holy Sacraments. But you and I, oh, Catholic Christian, who are born and bred in the full light and with every opportunity of doing good, how could we put forward such an excuse? But what am I saying? Even many heathens, who followed the mere light of reason and lived better than many a Christian, shall testify against us.

You will say, perhaps, that the subject of our past meditations was chosen only with a view to frighten and terrify you. And you are perfectly right. Would to God that all who need to be frightened were filled with terror by it! I should congratulate myself and thank God from my heart, but in the way

which St. Paul speaks of: "I am glad: not because you were made sorrowful, but because you were made sorrowful unto penance" (2 Cor. 7 : 9). Even so should I rejoice if some of you were terrified and dismayed by the meditation on the last judgment; not by a mere passing fear, but by a fear unto penance; a fear that would make you regret your past sins and never again offend God. We shall all appear before the tribunal of God, there to give an account of our stewardship; what will it help us to thrust that truth out of our minds? Shall we have less reason to fear or to expect judgment? Not without cause does the Holy Ghost warn us: "Remember thy last end," oh, man! and think of it often, "and thou shalt never sin." Let each one recall this to mind when he feels an inclination to sin; let him say to himself: would I do this if I heard the last trumpet calling out: arise, ye dead, and come to judgment? Should I wish to have this revealed to heaven and earth? Let each one think: the life I now lead and the manner of it is in accordance with my Christian profession, and with the sworn promise I made to God in Baptism to renounce the vain world and its idle, silly customs, the flesh and its lusts, the devil and all his works? that there may be no one to accuse him at the last day. Otherwise, if your answer to this question is not favorable, then abandon the life you are leading and embrace another. Say to yourself: on this life, and I know not how long it will last, depends my future judgment, the position I shall hold in it, whether I shall be on the right side with the Angels, or on the left with the devils; therefore I will spend this short, uncertain time in the service of my God alone, so that the meditation of the last judgment, instead of terrifying me, shall inspire me with a consoling hope, and when the great day comes I may enter with the sheep of Christ into eternal joys! Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE LAST SENTENCE OF THE JUDGE ON THE CRIMINAL.

"*Many are called, but few chosen.*"—Matt. 20: 16.

Fearful words: The smaller number shall be called to the kingdom of heaven, and the greater number condemned to hell! If we blind mortals only thought of that while there is still time, that we might be inspired with a salutary fear, and so live that we may be found among the few elect! We have hitherto considered the state of the guilty sinner before the judgment-seat, and how he shall be summoned to judgment, questioned therein, accused, and convicted. There is still another and that a most terrible point to be considered, namely, how he shall be condemned by the sentence pronounced on him. "Then shall he say to them also that shall be on his left hand: Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire!" Ah, those words are enough to dry up the marrow of one's bones! Depart from me, you cursed! Where to? Into everlasting fire!

I shall speak to you to-day on the words of the first part of this sentence:

"*Depart from me, you cursed.*"

1. The circumstance of the place shall make the sentence terrible, and that is the valley of Josaphat, when the whole universe, heaven and earth, and all that is in heaven, earth and hell shall be gathered together; "then shall the King say to them that shall be on his right hand: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation

of the world." He begins by bestowing the eternal reward with which his children shall rejoice. Meanwhile the wicked shall have to stand there, gnashing their teeth with rage and envy, seeing the happiness of the others, which might have been theirs, too, had they not excluded themselves from it by the perversity of their wills. "These, seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation, saying within themselves, repenting, and groaning for anguish of spirit: "These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. Behold! how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints" (Wisd. 5 : 2-5), with whom they will rejoice forever! The elect, after they have been invited to go into eternal happiness, shall not enter into it immediately, but shall wait till the sentence on the wicked shall be carried out. For although the just shall be the first to hear their sentence, they shall be the last on whom it will be fulfilled, as St. Matthew expressly says: "And these shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just into life everlasting" (Matt. 25 : 46). Again a source of fearful shame for the reprobate. Who could describe the fierce anger and intolerable shame and anguish of heart that the proud Aman suffered when he was forced to see Mardochai honored by the king, while he himself had to walk on foot, leading the king's horse, on which Mardochai was seated in great pomp? Who could describe the rage and fury of the same Aman, when, after suffering so much shame, he was brought to be hanged in the sight of the triumphant Mardochai on the very gallows he had prepared for him? But what is it all compared to the shame, confusion and despair of the damned, when they shall be forced to look on the last day at the chosen servants of God seated in glory, and to tremble and shudder at the feet of those whom they scarcely deigned to cast a glance on during life, when they themselves shall be dragged by the demons to hell?

2. He will no longer be meek and gentle as a lamb, but rather like a ravening lion, so that the whole earth shall tremble at the sound of his voice. And what shall that sentence be? "Depart from me, you cursed." Let us consider the full import of these terrible words. "Depart from me;" to understand this, it is enough to know what it is to be separated from God forever. But, alas! who can tell us what that is? A saint who actually sees God and knows him clearly should come down from heaven to enlighten us on the point, and even then we should fail to grasp it fully. We may get a slight idea of it from the state of mind of Absalom, that disobedient, obstinate, undutiful son, who was banished by his father, but recalled and restored to favor through the intercession of Joab, under the condition, however, that he should never dare to present himself before his father, nor even to look at him. This condition seemed too hard and intolerable to the son. He saw how the courtiers, ministers, and attendants, how citizens and strangers, and even the poor and oppressed were freely admitted to the king's presence, while he himself dared not venture too near even to his father's chamber. No longer able to bear this reproach, he entreated Joab, saying: "I beseech thee, therefore, that I may see the face of the king;" if that may not be, I have no longer any wish to live, and you may tell him that he can have me put to death. The son of Manlius Torquatus, on whom his father pronounced this sentence on account of a crime he had committed: "I declare my son unworthy to be in my house, and I command him to go far away at once, out of my sight." The son was so afflicted at this that the next night he laid violent hands on himself, and hanged himself. Now, if these men were so oppressed with sorrow at a sentence that banished them from the sight of an earthly father, that they preferred death to banishment, what must it be to be separated and excluded forever from the house of God, from the inheritance of God, from the sight of God, from that God in whose possession we shall find

everything that is desirable, from that infinite Good, from whom to be separated is nothing less than to be separated from all that is good?

3. We do not understand this now, but shall in the next life. Our mind is now bewildered and darkened by all sorts of evil inclinations; our appetites are excited by worldly goods and the outward beauty that we behold with the senses; we have never seen God except by the faith darkly; hence what wonder is it that we long so little for the possession of God, that we feel so little regret at losing God! What wonder is it that we are so little affected by the threat of being deprived of him, that we are so callous and undisturbed at the thought of the judgment that awaits us! But, unhappy sinner, how will it be with you when you learn clearly in eternity what God is, and at the same time must hear that you are banished from his sight forever? To be deprived of a good with whose value one is not acquainted is tolerable enough, but to be banished, and that forever, from a Good that one has before his eyes, and knows to be his only happiness, oh, what a bitter parting that is! Depart from me, "because I called, and you refused" (Prov. 1 : 24). I wished to have you with me in heaven, but you did not wish to come. I became Man for you, shed my blood, gave up my life for your salvation, but you have made no use of my goodness. For years and years I have had patience with you while you were in the state of sin; I have offered you the benefits of my merits, of my Passion in the holy Sacrament of Penance, "and you refused." You did not wish to acknowledge or love me as your God; you have offered incense to other deities; you have adored the world and its vanities; I had to yield in your choice to a transitory gain, a filthy pleasure, a breath of honor, a mere mortal! My cross was a scandal to you; my poverty and humility too mean for you; my life and the laws of my Gospel only provoked your laughter; heaven was in your estimation not worth striving for. Away with you, then! Never for

all eternity shall you have any part with me! You have loved the curse; it shall be with you forever! Depart from me, you cursed! Away, ye demons, with those who belong to you!

Is there no mercy, then, no pity for those so miserably banished and condemned souls? No; Angels, Saints, the Mother of God, even parents, children, friends, relations among the elect, will all with biting laughter and exultant triumph cry out with one voice: Depart, you cursed! Away! To hell with you! So shall the father among the elect cry out to his reprobate child: Away with you, accursed son! So will the children cry out with scorn and contempt to their parents: Away with you, accursed father and mother! So will the husband cry out to his wife; the wife to her husband; one friend and acquaintance to another: Depart, you cursed! away with you to the depths of hell!

4. What are your thoughts now? Is your flesh of iron that it does not tremble? Are your hearts marble that they do not become soft? You should now fear this sentence with a wholesome fear, that you may avoid sin. Yes, fear; fear by all means, but fear no one except that just Judge who alone has the power of passing such a terrible sentence on you! Fear, but fear nothing except sin, for it alone can bring down that sentence on you! Fear, but not with an empty fear, that remains only in the imagination, and leaves the mind anxious and dispirited. Fear with an effectual fear that strides on to action, repressing our evil inclinations, withdrawing our hearts from the world and its vanities, confining us always within the bounds of the divine laws. If we know that we are free from sin, or even if we have committed all the sins in the world, but our conscience gives us testimony that we have repented of them sincerely, confessed them candidly, and amended our lives, and if, moreover, we have the earnest will never again to offend God deliberately, and always to do his holy will as well as we know how: then we can and shall always rejoice in the Lord that we have

not to fear that terrible sentence; a sentence that the divine goodness and mercy often suggests to us, now while there is still time, as a subject of meditation to inspire us with a wholesome, childlike fear, that we may resolve to be true to him always, and with this resolution to enjoy even in this life a foretaste of the happiness to which we shall be called with his chosen children by the divine Judge on that day.

Yet, in spite of that fear, most people shall be lost. Why so? How many, think you, are in hell who during life heard in sermons, or read in spiritual books, and that, too, with fear and trembling, of the last judgment and the terrible sentence on the wicked? How many of those here present who are now fillled with fear at the thought of that terrible sentence, and who will nevertheless on the last day be among the unhappy wretches on the left hand of the Judge, so that they will hear that sentence thundered forth against themselves? Why is this? It comes from the fact that after they have been for some time disturbed in mind by what they have heard, after having considered in a cursory manner what a reasonable man should do to avoid such an irreparable calamity, they forget those good thoughts in a short time, drive them out of their minds, and go on in their usual vicious, tepid, idle, vain, and therefore, as far as their salvation is concerned, most dangerous way of life. This is chiefly the case with those who, that they may not become melancholy, as they term it, deliberately avoid all reflection on such salutary and terrible truths, and, lest they should be forced to face them, wilfully absent themselves from sermons.

But you, oh, sinners, who are not yet earnestly resolved to renounce your vicious ways and to return to God by sincere repentance, fear! tremble! Bewail and lament your folly, the hardness and blindness of your hearts! Is it, then, your determination for such a wretched thing, for a momentary carnal pleasure, for some trifling gain, for the sake of being revenged

on your enemies, to satisfy your vanity, or for the love of a mortal creature—is it your determination to hear one day the terrible words: Depart from me, you cursed? Ah, souls, I beg of you by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, which still cries out to heaven for mercy; by the tears that the ever-blessed Virgin Mary, the Refuge of sinners, the Mother of mercy, has shed for you, enter into yourselves and return to God, most worthy of love, who now sincerely desires not your damnation, but your eternal happiness! Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE FREQUENT HEARING OF THE WORD OF GOD.

"*But that on the good ground are they who in a good and very good heart, hearing the word, keep it.*"—Luke 8 : 15.

Five times did the Lord on different occasions use the expression: "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." But never before did he cry out, as the Gospel says of him to-day. "Saying these things, he cried out: He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." What was he then speaking of? "The seed is the word of God." It is sowed so often from the pulpit, and yet it bears so little fruit. Some do not listen to it because they never come to a sermon; others listen, but the devil takes it out of their hearts, so that they do not believe; others believe for a time, but when temptation comes they fall away; in others, again, the word of God bears no fruit, because the multiplicity of worldly business and cares, and the riches and pleasures of life, distract them, so that the word of God is preached in vain to most men. It was this consideration that pressed that loud cry of complaint from the lips of our Lord. He was afterwards

buffeted, scourged, crowned with thorns, and nailed to the cross; but he did not cry out, "but held his peace." Now, when there is question of hearing his word, he cries out. Therefore much, very much, must depend on that hearing. And truly such is the case. "Blessed are those who in a good and very good heart, hearing the word, keep it."

To hear the word of God in sermons with a good and very good heart is a sure sign of predestination to heaven.

What does it mean to hear the word in a good heart? It means to hear sermons willingly, with a zealous desire, with real earnestness, just as one who is hungry longs for the hour of dinner. Now this is not the case with those who seldom come to sermons, or if it happens to suit them to come once, stay away two, three, or four times without urgent necessity; nor with those whom wind, or rain, or heat, or cold, or the desire of sleeping longer can keep at home. All these show clearly they have no appetite or hunger for the food of the soul. A hungry man will not come too late to meals if he is warned in time. A hungry man will not go away from the table after he has taken a few mouthfuls of soup. Still less does a hungry man remain away from table altogether, if his place is marked for him.

What, then, does it mean to hear the word of God in a very good heart? It means to come constantly to sermons, with a very good intention; to pay attention to what is said, with a genuine desire to draw some spiritual profit from it, and after the sermon to do one's best to put into practice what one has heard. Oh, here I might well cry out with our Lord: "Many are called, but few chosen!" Many are called on every Sunday by the sound of the bell to hear the word of God; and sometimes many come, but there are few who hear the word in a good and very good heart.

They who hear the word of God in sermons with a good and

very good heart have a certain mark, or predestination that they shall one day see God in heaven, and love him in eternal joys. The holy Fathers and spiritual authors are unanimous on this point. For the sake of brevity I will quote only a few of them. "To have a good appetite," says St. John Chrysostom, "is a sign of good bodily health; so, too, it is a sure sign of a future eternal life when one is eager and desirous of hearing instructions and exhortations." St. Augustine says: "He who willingly hears the word of God need not doubt that he has received a document from his heavenly country assuring him of the possession of it." Again: "There is no surer sign of predestination than to hear the word of God willingly."

This doctrine is founded on the infallible testimony of eternal truth. Could our Lord speak more clearly of it than he has done? "He that is of God heareth the words of God" (John 8 : 47). He compares his elect to sheep whom the Angels shall separate from the goats on the last day and place on the right hand. Now, who are the true sheep of Christ? Let him tell us, for he knows best: "My sheep hear my voice." Do you wish to know who they are? Then see whether they hear my voice willingly; from that you will know whether they belong to me or not. "I give them life everlasting: and they shall not perish forever, and no man shall pluck them out of my hand." When the woman lifted up her voice to the Lord, saying: "Blessed is the womb that bore thee," "Yea, rather," replied he at once, "blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it."

There is no more powerful means of bringing men to eternal salvation than to hear the word of God in sermons. In two ways does the hearing of sermons work the salvation of souls: in the root and in the sign. In the sign, because it is a sign that heaven shall be their dwelling. Every man is willing to speak of his fatherland; he who is a native of Ireland, although he may live thousands of miles away from it, will talk of its glories with

every mark of inward and outward pleasure. In the same way, one can see from what you hear with eagerness and pleasure what countryman you are; what is your fatherland; whether you are lovers of God or not; whether you belong to heaven or not. "He that is of God, heareth the words of God." When I see one who is constant and eager in hearing the word of God explained in sermons, although I cannot see his heart, yet I unhesitatingly come to the conclusion that he is a pious soul and must have a good will; for fervor and eagerness in hearing divine things is a sure sign that a man loves God, and that heaven is his fatherland, since he is so pleased to hear it spoken of. And if I am deceived in my opinion, that man must have been able to disguise his feelings in a most remarkable way.

Again, the hearing of sermons works the salvation of the soul "in the root." That is, just as the root brings to the tree and all its branches the sap which makes it grow, so souls receive in the hearing of sermons the spiritual nourishment whereby they are strengthened against temptations, maintained in good, and further impelled to produce worthy and copious fruits of salvation. For in what does preaching consist? Let that wonderful preacher, St. Francis of Sales, tell us, who by this means converted countless sinners to true penance, and brought seventy-two thousand heretics to the true faith. Preaching, he says, is the revelation and explanation of the will of God in regard to men, drawn from the divine word to instruct and exhort men to serve the divine majesty in this life, that they may be happy in the next. This is the two-edged sword, as St. Paul says, which can pierce the heart of the most obdurate sinner, if he only wishes to hear it, and impel him to surrender at last to God by true repentance: "The word of God is living and effectual, and more piercing than any two-edged sword, and reaching unto the division of the soul and the spirit" (Hebr. 4 : 12). The prophet David calls it a bright light, which shines in the darkness, so that we may not fall amid

the dangers that surround us, or wander away from the true path to heaven. "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths" (Ps. 118 : 105). Our dear Lord calls it sometimes a seed: "The seed is the word of God;" sometimes a net. The word of God is a shield, by which Christians who hear it well and properly defend and protect themselves against the enemies of their souls. It is a fertilizing rain, that moistens and bedews the heart, so that it may not grow dry in the love of God. It is the bread of the strong, the milk of the weak. Hence there have been at all times so many wonderful conversions of sinners, so much progress in others to a high degree of sanctity, who otherwise would hardly have thought of their salvation or perfection, if they had not by chance or the effect of some inward inspiration from God come to hear a sermon. I appeal to all who are accustomed to frequent sermons to testify to the truth of this. Do they not always feel some good movement in the heart, which urges them to avoid this or that vice, to practise this or that virtue, a movement that they would not have felt so keenly otherwise, that they would perhaps never have thought of had they remained away from the sermon? Nor can it be otherwise; no matter what is the subject treated of, a soul desirous of salvation can always find some good thought in it, and God is forced by his own promise to give on such occasions a grace that is bound to work good in the hearts of the hearers. With reason has a certain author left us these remarkable words in his writings: I have, he says, for more than fifty years looked for three sorts of men in the world, and never found them, nor even heard of them; an industrious man in want of bread, a sober man whose life was shortened, and a diligent hearer of the word of God who did not lead a good and Christian life. Sooner will you see a miracle than see a man who comes regularly to sermons with a good will live wickedly or be addicted to great vices. We cannot doubt the words of St. Augustine: "There is no greater

mark of predestination than to hear willingly the word of God."

What am I now to think or say of him who for a whole year seldom or never, or only by chance, hears a sermon; either because he does not like it and has no relish for the word of God, or because he despises it and imagines he is learned and clever enough, and so has no need of being instructed, or through a most mistaken idea that he can live piously and gain heaven without hearing sermons, or through laziness and sloth, which makes him unwilling to mortify himself so far as to sacrifice an hour's sleep for God's sake, one hour on Sundays for the good of his soul, or through fear lest the truth should be told to him, and his way of life found fault with? What am I to think of him? I must only leave him to God, who will judge us. If SS. Chrysostom, Bernard, Augustine, Gregory, speak the truth, he is in a bad way. Oh, it is a bad sign and the beginning of rebellion against God to have no desire to hear his word, "which a soul that loves God always hungers for." No wisdom or learning is so great as not to stand in need of the enlightenment and impulse of the Holy Ghost, who, generally speaking, has in the present dispensation of his Providence attached the granting of his light to the hearing of his word for those who have the opportunity of hearing it. Ordinarily speaking, they who imagine they are not in need of sermons are more in want of them than others, as those sick persons are in a more dangerous state who think they are well. It is not easy to be pious and remain so when one neglects the opportunities of hearing the word of God. A clock, no matter how well it is made, will soon stop and strike no more if it is not wound up. A man, no matter how pious he is, since his corrupt nature is always inclined to evil, will soon decrease in piety, or, at all events, not lead the life that God desires, unless he is at certain times encouraged to good. If they whose hearts are sunk in and attached to earthly things can derive little profit even from sermons, because, as our Lord says in to-day's Gospel, the seed

is choked by thorns, that is, by the cares, riches, and pleasures of life, how will it be with him who, occupied the whole week with temporal things, never comes to hear anything good about heavenly and eternal riches?

The terrible words of our Lord are well known. After having said, "He that is of God heareth the words of God," he turned to the Scribes and Pharisees and said to them: "Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God." Alas, what a terrible sentence! But, after all, are they not as badly off who never come to sermons? One thing I should like to whisper in the ears of such people, namely, the prayer of the Church: Dear souls! souls purchased at such a high price! souls created for heaven alone! "let us so pass through temporal goods as not to lose eternal riches!" If you are busied the whole week with temporal concerns, at least give to your souls one hour of rest and refreshment; if you seek so eagerly the comfort of the body, at least grant your souls their necessary nourishment. "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul" (Matt. 26 : 26). Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE ETERNAL FIRE OF HELL.

"*For he shall be delivered to the gentiles.*"—Luke 18 : 32.

Woe to you and me if we do not atone by timely repentance for our many sins! For if an angry God delivered up his only Son into the hands of the Gentiles to be put to death for the sins of others, how will it be with us if we fall into the hands of

an avenging God on the day of judgment, if the sentence on us shall be, "Depart, you cursed"? Then shall we, too, be delivered, and to whom, and for what purpose? To the torturers? "Into everlasting fire!" Here is food for thought. Fire! Eternal fire! Loss of heaven; separation from God; the gnawing worm of conscience; mad rage and fury against one's companions; mad howlings and curses and blasphemies of the damned; intolerable stench; hunger and thirst; torments without alleviation, comfort, or hope! Fire! Eternal fire! We think so seldom of this; and yet if we reflected on it as frequently as we should, eternal fire would not be the lot of so many. We shall consider this subject to-day, according to the warning of the Holy Ghost: "Let them go down alive into hell" (Ps. 54 : 16); go down in thought into hell during life, that you may not have to go there after death.

I. The wicked shall be condemned to fire.
II. They shall be condemned to eternal fire.

I. Of all the elements, the most active and penetrating is fire; of all torments, the worst and most intolerable is that caused by fire. The hardest stones and metals, steel and iron, brass and copper, silver and gold, are melted by the heat of fire, and made like a flowing stream. To be burnt alive, singed with burning torches, torn with red-hot pincers, and roasted on burning coals were the worst tortures inflicted either by criminal judges on offenders, or by tyrants on the martyrs of Christ, who gave their blood for the faith.

If one happens to burn the outer skin of the finger it is recommended to hold the affected part to the fire to draw the heat out. The remedy is an assured one; but did any of you ever try it to see how painful it is? Oh, how the poor patient screams and bites his lips, and how often he draws his finger away! Yet the flesh is not even in the fire, which merely sends the heat out to it. How would it be if the finger had to be kept

in the fire or on a burning coal for the space of one or two minutes? Truly there is many a one who would rather cut the finger off altogether than bear such torture.

All the fire we have ever seen or could see on earth is only a thin smoke in comparison with the intensity and activity of the fire of hell. The fiery rain that an angry God poured down from heaven on the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrha; that furnace in Babylon, of which the flames rose to the height of forty-nine cubits; all these things are nothing compared to hell. The holy martyr, St. Lawrence, jested with his executioners as he lay on the gridiron for a few hours at the farthest; others sang joyful melodies in the midst of the flames. So little did they think of earthly fire, if they could only escape the far more terrible fire of hell, in which there is no singing or laughing, but only howling, weeping, and gnashing of teeth.

The reason of this is evident; for all our fire on earth is only a natural element, which can work and torture only according to its ordinary natural strength, and can burn nothing but material bodies. The fire of hell, on the other hand, is an element raised miraculously above its natural powers, so that it burns and tortures not merely bodies, but also souls and pure spirits. Our earthly fire after a short time deadens sensibility and consumes the body to ashes, but the fire of hell has received from the Creator the peculiar property of devouring and at the same time preserving what it devours, of tormenting and yet never destroying what it tortures, of burning and yet never consuming what it burns. Our fire is kindled by weak creatures; the infernal fire by the Almighty God. "I....will refine them as silver is refined" (Zacharias 13 : 9). Thus we may see that the divine omnipotence is the soul of this fire; it lights it, fans it, and excites it to the highest pitch.

Now, if our earthly fire can cause such pain that one may not hold his finger in the flame of a wax candle for one minute, who of us shall be able to dwell in the midst of the raging flames of

hell, compared to which all our fire is but a shadow? And yet the reprobate man shall be buried in this flame; that is, he shall be covered and surrounded with it on all sides, and shall have to remain so for all eternity. Holy Writ always represents this fire to us by most terrible pictures, and by the awful effects it produces; it is a place where a fiery shower falls from above like a stream on the damned, and inundates them from below. It is described as a madly rushing torrent, which drowns the wicked in its foaming and raging waves. It is likened to a fierce dragon that bites, tears and devours. Our dear Saviour uses a strange mode of expression: after having exhorted us rather to cut off the hand or foot, and tear out the eye that might lead us into sin, and thus to enter blind and lame into heaven, than, having eyes, hands, and feet, to be hurled into hell, he adds these words: "For every one shall be salted with fire" (Mark 9 : 48). That is to say, as fish that is salted in a barrel is so completely penetrated by the salt that no part of it remains unsalted, so also they who are condemned to hell shall be tormented by fire, not merely on the outside of their bodies, but in every part of them. Oh, woe to you who are now given up to carnal sins if you do not do timely penance! You shall one day be a burning coal in this fire; that body of yours, corrupted by the filth of foul passions, shall be completely penetrated by an intolerable heat, that will pierce you through like a glowing iron; your flesh shall be roasted, the marrow in your bones melted, your brain shall boil and seethe in your head, and flames of fire shall burst forth from your mouth, and nose, and eyes, and ears. Thus shall you be in heli surrounded with fire, above and below, on the right and on the left, inside and outside.

II. It would be tolerable in some degree if it were ever to end, but it is eternal. But to live always in fire; to have a fiery house for one's dwelling; flames for one's bed and covering;

never to die in that fire; never to be released from it; never to have any alleviation of one's torments, to burn forever: that is at the same time terrible and incomprehensible! Oh, truly! let hell be far hotter than the Holy Scriptures describe it; let its pains and torments be increased a thousandfold; let them last for countless millions of years; all that would be as nothing as long as the fearful "forever" is wanting. If the fire of hell would only come to an end some time or other; if I could now go to the lost souls, and say to them with truth: your torments, oh, unhappy wretches, shall indeed last for a long time, but sooner or later they shall end; I should make a heaven out of a hell, and fill it with songs of gratitude and praise, instead of curses and blasphemies. "But the hell of fire, their worm dieth not, and the fire is not extinguished" (Mark 9 : 46, 47). "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire!" Let us ponder for a while on these words, and see what eternity means, and then so order our lives that we may never have to suffer in such a fire; for our fate in that respect depends on ourselves.

If long continuance makes even pleasure painful, how intolerable must not pain itself be when it lasts long? It is painful to have a bad tooth drawn; yet it is not difficult to console the patient in such a case. Have courage, you say to him; it will soon be over; the whole thing will be done in a moment, and you will have no more pain to suffer. If it took one, two, or three hours to perform the operation, who would submit to such torture? And not only is the actual suffering of a long agony intolerable to us, but the mere sight of such agony in others fills us with pity and terror. A robber or murderer is condemned to the gallows or to the sword; if the executioner bungles in his work, and keeps the poor wretch suffering a long time, how the bystanders murmur and express their disapproval of him! If the pain of having a tooth drawn, or of dying by the rope or the sword, is rendered so acute by being lengthened that we cannot even behold it in another person

without being horrified at the sight, what must be the state of one who has to live for a long time in fire? How must it be with him who has to spend not one or two hours, nor one or two days, nor one or two years, but a whole endless eternity in the terrible and most painful fire of hell?

Oh, eternity! exclaims St. Augustine; what art thou? "Say what you will of it, and you will never have said enough." Say that it includes as many millions of years as there are stars in the firmament, grains of sand on the sea-shore, leaves on the trees, drops of water in all the rivers of the world, "you will never have said enough;" when you have counted up that immense number, you are still far from the total of eternity. Why? Because all those things bear some measure and proportion; thus, so many drops make a gallon, so many gallons a cask, so many casks a stream, so many streams a great river, so many rivers a sea; and the drops, no matter how small they are, can be so increased and added to that they will make the ocean. But no time, no matter how long, has any proportion to eternity. Add millions of years to it and it will not become greater; take away millions from it and it will not grow less. Cain is now in hell for some thousands of years, but he has not lessened his eternity by a moment; he can say: I have now been burning in hell for so many thousands of years; but he cannot say: now I have one hour less to suffer. Eternity remains just as long as it was when he first entered hell.

Oh, man! where is your reason? For all the goods of the world you would not spend one quarter of an hour in a temporal fire; and for the sake of a miserable coin that you gain or keep unjustly, for a wretched, brutal pleasure, you choose the eternal fire of hell! You would rather burn forever in hell than restore the injured honor of another; than honestly disclose your sins in confession; than forgive your enemy; than abandon that person who is a proximate occasion of sin to you; rather be in hell than give up that unlawful intimacy; than re-

move that stumbling-block; rather be in hell forever than give up the habit of cursing and drunkenness? Where is your reason, I ask you again; or where is your faith? Do you not believe in hell? Then you need not believe in God, for one as well as the other is an article of our faith.

"Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Is. 33 : 14.) Can you, who cannot bear the least inconvenience, who cannot endure to hear a dog howling, a child crying, or a fly buzzing round your ears? How will you be able to hear, and at the same to feel the crackling and rattling of your bones in the lake of boiling brimstone; and that forever? You who cannot bear the approach of a poor beggar, how will you stand the intolerable stench of your body and the bodies of others burning in sulphur; and that forever? "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire?" Can you, oh, woman! brought up in every comfort and luxury, who so carefully avoid all that might occasion you the slightest pain? A trifling headache or toothache seems intolerable to you; to fast and abstain for forty days seems almost an impossibility to you; an ill-fitting shoe, an ill-made bed, a dish not prepared exactly to your taste, a soup too hot or too cold, is enough to excite your anger; how will you be able to hold out on a bed of fire in hell; and that forever? "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire?" Can you, oh, unchaste man! who spend day and night in seeking sensual gratification, and pass your time in a round of dissipation? Will you be able to stand that hellish oven, in which your body, penetrated through and through by fire, shall become fire itself? And that forever? "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire?" Can you, oh, vain and delicate maiden! who cannot now bear the prick of a needle without screaming; who could not bear a spark of fire, or even a drop from a burning candle on those shoulders that you expose as a source of temptation and scandal to souls? How will you be able to lie on, and hide

yourself, and wallow in those burning coals of hell fire, not for a day, or a month, or a year, or a hundred thousand years, but for all eternity? Which of you can dwell with devouring fire?

No; there is not one of us who can do that; not one of us who can make up his mind to it! Therefore we must do penance, and that at once, for our past sins, and amend our lives. Ah, we want no hell! no fire! no eternal fire! We are ready for any other punishment, oh, angry God! only save us from eternal fire! Here cut, here burn, but spare us in eternity! From this moment let us renounce sin and begin to lead new lives, so that we may escape this fire, and come to thee in eternal joys.

QUADRAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE THOUGHTS OF THE REPROBATE IN HELL.

"*Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*"—2 Cor. 6 : 2.

When we meditated on the everlasting fire of hell, I do not doubt that many of you, on this day two weeks ago, were filled with an unusual fear, and made most earnest resolutions to do everything to escape that fire. And to those I say in the words of St. Paul: "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Now, if you wish, you can save yourselves from eternal flames. Have you sinned? Behold, now is the time to do penance and to serve God with zeal; for that is the only means of escaping hell. But if you allow this time of grace to pass by, and go into eternity without having done penance, then never for all eternity shall you be able to entertain the slightest hope of escaping the torments of hell. What are your thoughts on this matter now? If I were to address

that question to some reprobate sinner in hell he would say: I am lost, and lost forever. I could have escaped hell; I could have gained the happiness of heaven. Now I should willingly escape out of hell, and be in heaven; but it is impossible, and will be eternally impossible. These are the two thoughts which cause the reprobate the greatest torture.

I. I could have been happy, and did not wish it.

II. Now I should willingly be happy, but shall not be able for all eternity.

I. To be poor and miserable through sheer necessity, which one could not foresee or avoid, is indeed a very wretched state; but to be poor and miserable through one's own fault is a source of bitter remorse, in which no consolation is to be found. Such is the case with the damned, for they might have been happy had they wished. This is the bitter thought, the agonizing remorse that tortures the lost soul on its first entry into hell, and will continue to torture it for all eternity: I was able, but was unwilling! I could easily have escaped eternal fire, but did not wish! Elect children of God! I might have been with you, but I did not wish! Priceless joys of heaven, it lay in my power to gain you, but I did not wish to have you! God of all happiness! I might have possessed you forever, but I did not wish it! I could have done all this, for who could have prevented me?

1. I cannot lay the least blame on my God, who always had the earnest wish and desire to save all mankind, without exception. This was the end he had in view in making me to his image and likeness. This is shown by the unheard-of love that forced him, "for us men and for our salvation," to come down from heaven, to assume our mortal nature, to live a poor, humble, and contemptible life in the eyes of the world for three and thirty years, to suffer all sorts of discomfort, hunger, thirst, ridicule and mockery, thorns and scourges, even to the painful

death of the cross; and all that to save us from hell, and to open for us the gates of heaven, that were closed by the sin of our first parents.

2. Perhaps I was not provided with the means necessary to get to heaven? Ah, no! What was said to the young man in the Gospel held good for me, too. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." Why have I not kept the commandments? Have I, perhaps, been ignorant of them? Have they not often been explained to me in the Christian Doctrine and in sermons? Can I say that they were too difficult for me to observe? But I should be contradicted by all the elect in heaven, who entered there before my death, amongst whom there are many who were weak and subject to evil inclinations as I was, people of every condition, age, sex, and nation, who have all been obliged to walk the same way of the divine commandments, for there is no other way of arriving at happiness. They were able to do that; why was not I? What a multitude of pious Christians lived with me, who daily gave me the benefit of their good example; who so often put me to shame, when I considered the edifying lives they were leading! They were able to do that; why was not I?

3. Was opportunity or time wanting to me to use the prescribed means in order to serve God, do good and escape hell? But what beautiful opportunities I have had! All the churches were open to me, inviting me to pray to God, to praise and bless him. All the confessionals were at my service, exhorting me to enter, and in the spirit of repentance to lay down the burden of my sins. All the bells called to me in the morning to offer the holy Mass to God and to join in the usual devotions. All preachers had prepared themselves on Sundays and holydays for me as well as for others, to speak to our hearts, to warn us against hell, to exhort us to good, to deter us from sin, to urge us to zeal in the service of God, and to lead us to heaven. Ah, would that I had been diligent in attending to them! What

beautiful exhortations and salutary doctrine I might have received from them for the good of my soul!

What a beautiful time I have had in the twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty years that were given me on earth! There was not a moment of them in which, if I so willed, I might not have gained eternal glory in heaven! If I had made a good use of only the fiftieth part of the time I spent in vanity, idleness, and sin, how rich I should now be in eternity! Even in the last moment of my life, when my friends and my increasing weakness announced to me the approach of death, the merciful God was ready, if I had only been willing, to receive me again into his grace and friendship, although for the greater part of my life I had treated him as my worst enemy. There was nothing in heaven, on earth, or under the earth that could have come between me and eternal happiness.

4. Who is to blame? I alone. Why am I not in eternal joys, like those others? Why am I now in hell? The will was wanting to me! This is the cruel memory that now tortures me and that will never cease to torment me for all eternity. The will was wanting; I did not wish to hearken to the voice of God; I closed my eyes to the light; I rejected good inspirations; I disregarded the warnings of my conscience; I wilfully followed the inspirations of the devil, the allurements of wicked men, the perverse usages and customs of the world. I have wasted my precious time in sin; I have deferred repentance from day to day, until no more time was left to me.

II. Nothing is more apt to make us despair than to be always willing, and never to have the power of carrying out our wishes. Consider the state of two persons who are enamored of each other, who would willingly be always in each other's company, but are kept apart by their parents. What torments of longing they suffer night and day; how they sigh and moan and give expression to fruitless desires, knowing all the time that they

have not the slightest hope of seeing their wish gratified! What, then, must be the unspeakable torment of the damned soul in hell who is filled with desire for all eternity, and for all eternity can never attain the object of his desire nor have the slightest hope of attaining it? What more miserable than always to wish for what you can never have, and always to hate what will be always with you? And such is the state of the lost soul: for all eternity he will not have what he desires, and yet for all eternity he will have to suffer what he hates. Who doubts that the lost soul would willingly be happy and be released from hell? On the one hand the clear knowledge of the eternal happiness from which he is excluded, and on the other the actual experience of infinite misery in which he is, must inspire him with the greatest desire of enjoying the one and being delivered from the other. When we mortals enter into eternity our eyes are opened for the first time, and we clearly see what we now behold only darkly by faith and cannot properly appreciate, namely, that the possession of God is our only supreme Good. Then the sinner, to his own eternal torment, shall be able to say to himself: "Know thou, and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God" (Jer. 2 : 19). He will seek death and not find it for eternity. So that there is nothing but despair, suffering without end, misery without end, fire without end!

You can easily see the lesson we should learn from this. What all the reprobate in hell are eternally wishing for and can never have, that is now in our power. What the damned did not wish for during life, alas! that is the very thing that most men on earth do not wish for, and therefore hell is daily filling with souls—two considerations that we should take deeply to heart. Of the first St. Augustine says: we receive two kinds of lives from the Creator: one here in time, the other in eternity; whether the first is to be happy or miserable rests not with us to decide; God has reserved to himself the right of arranging

all that; as to the happiness or misery of the other, it is now a matter of choice for us, and the Lord has left it to our own free will. Whether I am rich or poor, sick or well, honored or despised, in joy or in sorrow during life, depends not on me, no matter how legitimately I may work for it, or how my inclinations tend; I must wait for the providence of God to settle things for me; but whether I live in joy or misery in eternity, in heaven or in hell, that depends on myself; with the help of God's grace, I can shape my own destiny in that respect.

Now I ask: is it true, or rather is it possible, that, although we can, we do not wish to be happy, and that, too, eternally? This is what puzzled the man who was rapt up in spirit by the angel into heaven, where the indescribable joys of the elect were shown to him: Oh, my God! he exclaimed, what a happy life! Who can come to this place? Whoever wishes, answered the angel. What! replied the man, whoever wishes? And who would not wish to attain such happiness? Oh, answered the angel, many, very many—nay, the greater number of men, do not wish to have this happiness. Then he brought the man down to hell, where he saw, to his great terror and horror, the torments suffered by the damned. Alas! he asked again, who comes to this place? And again the angel answered: whoever wishes. What! is it possible for a man to be so foolish as to desire to be hurled into such a frightful den of torments? Yes; most people in the world are guilty of that folly. So it is; he who wishes shall go to heaven; that is, he who orders his life so as to receive the promised reward from God. And he who wishes shall be hurled into hell; that is, all those who do not avoid sin, or who, after having committed sin, do not do penance while they have time.

Sinner, see the folly of which you are guilty; you do not wish to be happy, and therefore you will not be so; your desire is to go to hell, and therefore hell will be your everlasting dwelling. But is it possible, I ask again, that you are so foolish and

senseless? If it were in your power to order your temporal life as you wish, would you not seek to lead a life of the utmost wealth, comfort, joy, and happiness? You who think of nothing else but rest, comfort, pleasure, and self-gratification in every possible way, even in sin and vice? And yet you do not find in those things the happiness you seek in them, and you will never find it; you will never attain what you are so eager to possess. Ah, why, then, do you not wish and seek to be eternally happy in heaven? for that can you be if you will! But, oh, madness and folly! this is what you do not wish; this is what you absolutely refuse! You may tell me the contrary a thousand times, and my answer to you will be that you are not in earnest; you do not wish for heaven; you continue on in the old habits of sin; you still keep your ill-gotten goods; you refuse to give up your unlawful love, your hatred and enmity; you are as fond as ever of swearing and cursing, of drunkenness and intemperance, of pride and vanity; you put off repentance from day to day; there is no sign of amendment in you. Therefore you do not wish to be eternally happy, although you have the power of becoming so; you do not wish to go to heaven, and thus your wish is to be lost forever. One day you will have a far different wish, but for all eternity it will be impossible to fulfil it, and that will be one of your worst torments in hell. Amen.

Second Sunday of Lent.

The Pain Caused to the Damned by the Thought of Heaven, or the Pain of Loss.

"*He was transfigured before them.*"—Matt. 17 : 2.

If the transfiguration of our Lord, in which manifested for a short time some few rays of his divinity, occasioned such lively joy to his disciples that Peter, ravished out of himself, wished to remain in that place forever, what must be the joy of the elect in heaven, where the God of all beauty shows himself face to face as he is, and allows himself to be possessed by them for all eternity? "Lord, it is good for us to be here," we shall all cry out in ecstasy, if we shall have the happiness of gaining heaven. Unhappy, reprobate sinners! you shall never for all eternity have any share in this manifestation of heavenly glory, or in the joy of the elect. Oh, yes; even you shall have your share in it. But how? Are the damned to be one day released and to be admitted to the glory of heaven and the joys of the blessed? No; they shall, quite against their will, turn their thoughts and minds to heaven, and contemplate the glory of God and the bliss of the Saints.

Heaven and its elect shall be to the reprobate another eternal hell.

The damned shall be incessantly tormented by the thought that they have lost heaven. The more joyous and blissful the dwelling of the Saints, the more painful shall hell be for the damned souls, on account of the constant yearning for the eternal happiness that the damned have lost by their own fault, and

can never hope to gain during eternity. The greater and more desirable the good that one longs for, the more intense is the bitterness and disappointment caused by being deprived of it. If you wish to torture a human being, or even a brute beast, in a most cruel manner, chain him up in a prison and place beside him the most costly food and drink that he cannot reach, so that he has to die of hunger and thirst with food and drink before his greedy eyes. Death itself is not so painful as to be thus tantalized. When God brought Moses to the top of the mountain and showed him from afar the promised land, flowing with milk and honey, and at the same time announced to him that as a punishment for his doubting he was to have no part therein, how great must have been his affliction at hearing those words! But in that affliction you have a mere shadow of the torture caused the damned by heaven itself. This is the terrible pain of loss, as it is called, that is so often alluded to in Holy Writ as a warning to the living that we may all avoid hell, that is, sin. In the midst of their torments the damned shall know the glory and majesty of the Lord and his elect, not otherwise than as the sick man, whilst suffering the pains of illness, clearly recognizes what a great good health is, and ardently longs for it.

1. The pain of loss is increased by the fact that the damned, while suffering, see the bliss of the elect. "You did evil in my eyes," says the Lord, "and you have chosen the things that displease me. Therefore thus saith the Lord God: Behold, my servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall rejoice, and you shall be confounded; behold, my servants shall praise for joyfulness of heart, and you shall cry for sorrow of heart." Esau, after he had been deprived by Jacob of his birthright and had lost his father's blessing, "roared out with a great cry." Why? For, although he had lost his birthright, he still had his father alive with him to console him in his sorrow; he did not secure the first blessing of

his father, but he was not accursed on that account, and had still a second blessing to hope for: "And when he wept with a loud cry, Isaac, being moved, said to him: In the fat of the earth, and in the dew of heaven from above shall thy blessing be" (Gen. 27 : 38, 40). Nevertheless he "roared out with a great cry," like a lion in his sorrow. Unhappy reprobate! how will you roar and howl after having lost your eternal inheritance, the blessing and favor of your heavenly Father, being, moreover, accursed by God and condemned to the fire of hell, when you see your former brothers and sisters, surrounded with shining stars, seated on thrones of glory, and rejoicing in eternal delights!

What would not the rich glutton give if that view were shut out from him! "And, lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Unhappy wretch that I am! he must have exclaimed, Abraham was rich as I was during life, and by making proper use of his wealth gained eternal happiness; my riches have hurled me into hell, because I made a bad use of them! Lazarus was formerly a poor beggar, whom I looked on as less than my dog, and now he rejoices in Abraham's bosom, and is a child of everlasting glory and happiness, while I lie here in the abyss of hell!

2. From this painful recollection and consideration of the loss of heaven comes another torture for the damned; for they are filled with the most bitter hatred and envy on account of the happiness of the elect. Envy and jealousy is one of the lowest passions that fills the heart with gall, and gnaws at it incessantly. All other inordinate passions disturb the heart, but they bring with them some consolation and pleasure, while envy that arises from sorrow at another's good fortune is a torment without any alleviation, a trouble without any comfort. Cain, the first-born of men, could not bear his brother Abel. Why? Because Abel's sacrifice was pleasing to God, while his was rejected. This filled him with such chagrin that his coun-

tenance became pallid and haggard. He had no rest until he had got rid of his brother by cruelly murdering him. In the same way the sons of Jacob could not bear the sight of their brother Joseph. Saul, when he heard the people singing hymns of praise to David, "Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands," became so filled with envy and hatred that to his dying day he sought David's life. Aman fell sick and had to take to his bed, and lost all pleasure in his honors and riches, because Mardochai, whom he could not bear, was favored by the king. The Jews, because Stephen overcame them in argument, "were cut to the heart, and they gnashed with their teeth at him;" envy gnaws at the very marrow of their bones; for the most trifling thing it eats out the very life of a man.

Who can understand the terrible envy, the madness and rage of the damned in hell, when, raising the eyes of the mind unceasingly to heaven, they are forced to behold in the enjoyment of eternal happiness and delights the elect, against whom they have the most bitter hatred, and whom they would willingly drag down from heaven into hell with themselves if they could? What will not be their rage at seeing the bliss of those whom they persecuted during life, or despised as poor, mean, lowly outcasts, or laughed at as ridiculous fools, or treated contemptuously as their servants or slaves? When they shall be compelled to behold them for eternity enjoying unspeakable glory and happiness, while they themselves are lying in hell, mocked at and trampled upon by merciless devils.

Woe to those who have to experience those things before they believe them! Before they believe them, I say; because I am not at all sure that most men believe in the existence of such a hell; if they do believe and are afraid of it, I cannot understand how they reconcile the lives they lead with such a faith and fear. No; they do not believe in or fear hell, for we hear many saying in a laughing tone: Oh, the devil is not so black

as he is painted; people talk all sorts of things about hell, as if they had been there and knew all about it; up to this no one has come back from it to say what it is like. Let hell be hell; priests must have something to preach about, but it is not half so bad as they make out. See how they fear and believe in hell! And so, you wicked ones, you do not believe in hell because no one has come back from there to tell you what it is like? Why, then, do you believe that there is one God in three Persons? Yet no one has come from the other world to tell you about that. But if you believe one and not everything, you are unbelievers, and deny the Holy Scriptures. If you are right, we have reason to think that the Lord is making fools of us, and that he is uttering only an empty threat when he tells sinners that they shall burn forever in hell. Then must the Catholic Church be a false one, and the holy Fathers and interpreters mere deceivers. Then must you deny your religion, which teaches us this article of faith as well as all the others. Woe, I repeat, woe to those who must experience before they rightly believe in it!

Others of you say in your own minds, truly I believe in hell, and only too much do I fear it! Do you show that you really fear hell and dread the idea of suffering forever therein? It is not true; for you carry about with you the burden of grievous sin. You eat and drink according to your sensuality, and your sins are seated at table with you; you sleep and idle away your time till late in the day, and your sins are in bed with you; you clothe and adorn yourself, and your sins peep out from your extravagant dress; you go about amongst people, and walk, and joke, and laugh, and play, and amuse yourself at balls and parties, sometimes even during the holy season of Lent, and your sins are with you all the time; you go to church, to the confessional, even to the Table of the Lord to be fed with the immaculate flesh and blood of Jesus Christ, and you bring your sins, and more still than you had before, back with you. What sins?

Ah, that you know yourself only too well! Ask your conscience what are the sins that you have not yet properly confessed, or truly repented of, or seriously amended! And you fear hell? No, you rather wish to go to hell, for you love your sins, although you know that you shall be sent to hell for those very sins unless you repent of them.

You have now meditated on hell. Enter into yourself and see how you have to live in future, if you wish to escape eternal pains. Make a firm resolution to amend your life; repent of and detest your sins from the bottom of your heart; fear sin more than all other earthly evils; throw yourself at the feet of your crucified Lord, and with true contrition of heart and tears of sorrow beg of him by the merits of his sacred Passion to be merciful and to pardon you. Often say to God: "from the pains of hell deliver us, oh, Lord!" but add also: from mortal sin deliver us, oh, Lord! for that is the only thing that can bring you to hell. Let us all adhere to this resolution. For God's sake do not forget what you have heard; we have not been treating of trivial matters, but rather of how we are to escape an eternal hell, where there are everlasting torments for all the senses, in the odious company of the demons and lost souls, and where heaven itself is an eternal hell. Oh, woe to us if we should learn what it is by experience before we use the means of escaping it!

Oh, Mary, Mother of mercy! do not allow us ever to become the enemies of thee and thy Son, or to blaspheme thee forever! Take us under thy protection now while there is time; obtain for us a true hatred, sorrow, and detestation of our sins, a true love for thee and thy divine Son, and the grace to persevere therein till death, and for all eternity, and thus enjoy heaven in heaven. Amen.

Third Sunday of Lent.

The Pain of Sense in Hell.

"*He was casting out a devil.*"—Luke 11: 14.

Unfortunate and worthy of pity is the man possessed by the devil! But more unfortunate is the man who on the last day is condemned to the eternal flames of hell, and given over body and soul to be tormented by legions of devils! Oh, foolish mortals, who make deliberate choice of those torments! After having portrayed the pains that rack the soul and mind in hell and drive them to madness, I shall now describe, in order to inspire sinners with a salutary fear, the torments that there torture the body and its senses.

The pains of the body in hell are general, and at the same time unceasing.

The crosses and trials, pains and torments in this world, no matter how great or numerous they may be, are yet so divided and controlled that they never all attack the same man at the same time. Thus he who is poor is not at the same time sick; he who is sorrowful has not to suffer hunger and thirst; he who is persecuted and tormented by one man is not therefore made the object of general execration. A pain in the head or eye does not affect the hand or foot; lameness in the feet does not cause the chest to suffer; the body may be ill at ease, while the mind remains quite vigorous. There is always some part in a man that remains free from pain. But imagine a man who has to suffer all possible torments and pains in the highest degree

in every member of his body inwardly and outwardly at the same time. Truly you have then the most miserable wretch, and he could not bear such torments for a moment without a miracle; every pain, when it reaches its greatest intensity, must either cease or put an end to the patient.

But suppose one were enabled by a miracle to endure such an accumulation of torments for twenty, fifty, or a hundred years, and remain alive during the time; would we not then have a sketch of the state of the damned soul in hell? Not by any means; it would be a mere play or comedy in comparison. The reprobate would, so to speak, laugh at the idea of comparing those torments with what they have to endure in hell. "The worst sufferings one can have in this life," says St. Augustine, "are not only small, but actually nothing when contrasted with the torments of the damned." Why? Because all the pains and torments in the world are but instruments, set in motion by weak creatures; but in hell it is the almighty and angry, avenging God who measures out chastisement to evil doers. If you should unhappily be condemned to hell for eternity, how will you fare? Now you are delighted with the beautiful light of the day, with the flowers, gardens, meadows, beautiful paintings, amusing plays; what a change and what a terrible torment it will be for you when you shall be cast out into "the exterior darkness," into an eternal night! Now you often sully yourselves with lustful glances; you take pleasure in contemplating the beauty of others, in looking at impure objects, and in contemplation of vain apparel before the looking-glass; how fearful your punishment will be in hell, where you will behold nothing but shapes of deformity, into which all the bodies of the damned shall be transformed, and hideous spectres with which the demons shall terrify you forever! Now the eyes are delighted in company, and glisten with laughter and fun, nor do we think of shedding tears of repentance in order to wash out our sins; how that laughter shall be changed in that place

of torments, in which, according to the words of our Lord, there shall be nothing but weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The same weeping and gnashing of teeth shall be a torment for the ears. An ill-tuned instrument is intolerable to a skilled musician; a crying child in a room, women quarrelling in a house, the howling of a dog in the street, is a torment to many a sensitive individual. How intolerable it must be for the ears to have to listen to that hellish and hideous music made by the shrieks and howlings and curses and blasphemies of demons and lost souls, a music that shall last for eternity!

One of the worst pains of sense is a foul stench. You hold your nose if a dead dog or other carrion is lying in the street as you pass by. Sometimes when graves are opened a foul effluvium rises from them, strong enough to cause the death of any one who happens to be present. It is looked on as one of the greatest cruelties of the tyrant Maxentius that he caused a living man to be bound to a decaying corpse, until the fetid exhalations from it put an end to him. Ah, delicate worldlings! may God save you from hell! You cannot bear the smell of a smoking lamp; what will you do in that abyss in which, for all eternity, you will not have a breath of fresh air? into which all the filth of the earth flows as to its common centre? What will you do in that lake of sulphur in which the bodies of the reprobate shall seethe and boil, each one of them emitting such a fearful odor that it would be enough to fill the whole world with pestilence?

And what of the pain of taste? Hunger and thirst cause such agony that mothers have been known, when urged by the frenzy of famine, to eat their own children. May God save you all from hell! you voluptuaries, whose god is your belly, who swear at the cook for oversalting the soup, who, before saying a word of prayer in the morning, must gratify the palate with food and drink! Woe to you! How are you to fare in hell? Hear what infallible Truth says: "They....shall suffer hunger

like dogs" (Ps. 48 : 7); toads and adders shall be their food, not to satisfy their hunger, but to torture them all the more.

This terrible hunger shall be accompanied by a burning thirst that shall last forever. The damned shall cry out: hear, all ye fountains, brooks, torrents, lakes, seas, even ye morasses and muddy pools, give us only one or two drops of all the waters that flow by unused and unclaimed! But the answer shall come from the hellish tormentors, the evil spirits: yes! we shall bring you a cooling drink at once! molten lead and brass, the gall of serpents, the poison of dragons! Come, luxurious gluttons and voluptuaries, this is the table to which you are invited, this the drink prepared for you! You may have heard people bad with fever crying out: for the love of God, give me a drink of water, and after having got it complaining of thirst just as loudly as before: Oh, what a terrible thirst I am suffering! Is there anything like it? And while the water is being brought to them they look at it eagerly, and, so to speak, drink it up with their eyes before it touches their lips. Now put together all the thirst, dryness, heat, and fever ever suffered by the sick, and all will be as nothing compared to the fearful thirst felt by even one of the reprobate in hell.

Finally, with regard to the pain of touch, which is situated in all the senses and members of the whole body, suffice it to say that the damned live in everlasting fire, which rages both inside and outside them always. There is fire in the skin, in the flesh, in the eyes, in the ears, in the throat, in the hands and feet, in the nerves, in the marrow of the bones, in the whole body, so that it is like a glowing iron in the fire; and, as we have seen already, that fire is raised miraculously above its nature, so that it tortures, not merely according to the properties of fire, but at the same time inflicts on the body all kinds of pains and torments.

The most terrible thing in those hellish agonies is that they are not only general, but also incessant, uninterrupted, contin-

ual. The pains that one has to endure in this life have two properties that make them tolerable: they are either slight and trivial, and then are easily borne, or else they are violent, and their intensity in a short time makes weakened nature insensible to them, as we find to be the case with the sick, who, when near death, feel no more pain. And no matter how long a pain lasts, it is not always equally violent; it is interrupted or lessened occasionally. But in hell it is quite different; the damned soul will be tortured without hope of rest, for every moment of eternity it will suffer every imaginable kind of torment, without even a moment's interruption. Father Abraham! cried out the rich glutton from hell, I have but one favor to ask of you. I am suffering terrible tortures in these flames; give me one drop of water, only as much as you can take up on the tip of your finger! Only one drop, so that at least while it is falling on my tongue I may feel a momentary alleviation! So will the lost soul cry out after a thousand, a thousand million, a thousand times a thousand million of years; but not even that much refreshment will be given to it for all eternity. For all eternity without interruption the eyes shall be tormented by darkness and hideous spectres, the ears by howlings and curses, the smell by an intolerable stench, the taste by fearful hunger and thirst, the feeling by the fire in which the whole body is immersed; the damned soul shall be tortured without hope of rest forever and ever.

Oh, unhappy people who are condemned to hell! Oh, eternal hell! is it possible that hell is the place in which they are buried who die in mortal sin? It is an article of faith, and sinners are well aware of it and believe it. And there are still sinners in the world? Alas! yes, and in countless numbers! And do they all wish to go to hell? Yes; for they are certain that the lives they lead will bring them thither. Such is the belief, such are the lives even of those who hate nothing so much as trouble and discomfort; who wish and desire nothing but an

easy, comfortable, sensual, pleasant life; who place their happiness in the gratification of the eyes, ears, and tongue, in the pleasures of taste, smell, and touch; who tremble and shudder when one speaks to them of mortification of the senses, of self-denial, of penitential exercises; who, that they may devote themselves all the more freely to the gratification of their senses, laugh at the word of God, the Gospel truths, the warnings and menaces of the faith, God himself. Are those people going to hell to suffer for all eternity those terrible, general, unceasing pains and torments of that inextinguishable fire? Yes; they must make up their minds to that, for such is their belief; such must be the end of the lives they are leading. And why do they wish to go to hell? For the sake of that momentary, carnal pleasure in which they now take delight; for some temporal gain; for the love of a mortal creature; to gratify a passion; to be in harmony with the perverse world. And do they damn themselves for such trifles? Do they lose all for such worthless things? Do they choose hell, that terrible abyss of torments, for such a short-lived gain? Have those people completely lost their reason?

And yet hell shall be filled with those fools! Have not we ourselves often been so foolish, when we committed mortal sin for the sake of such wretched things, and thereby made deliberate choice of hell-fire? Alas! what have we done? What is to become of us? If we descend in spirit into hell, we find there souls that committed the same sins that we have been guilty of, many who have committed far less sin than we; many, and indeed many millions of angels who have sinned but once by a momentary thought. Oh, woe to us, then! for we have often deserved hell-fire by thought, word, and deed.

Since the choice is left to us, let us select that which is easier. We can and will not burn forever in hell; therefore let us do penance and begin at once, for our time may be short and death may hurry us into hell. Let us detest our sins with a repentant

heart above every other evil; acknowledge them in their minutest details in confession; be sorry for them to the hour of our death, and from this moment lead a different life, a life of penance, that by a timely amendment and contrition we may avoid the terrible, eternal pains of hell. Amen.

Fourth Sunday of Lent.

THE COMPANY OF THE REPROBATE IN HELL.

"*A great multitude followed him.*"—John 6: 2.

It is an old saying, and a true one: "It is consoling to have a companion in suffering." And to this fact the wicked generally appeal when they are threatened with hell. Oh, they say, if I am lost and have to go to hell, I shall not be the only one; I shall have plenty of companions, and amongst them the greatest and noblest. May God keep you and me out of that company! If there were not in hell that terrible fire that tortures both soul and body, if there were no gnawing worm of conscience to afflict the damned with the recollection of the happiness they have forfeited, if there were no darkness, nor howling and cursing, nor stench, nor hunger and thirst, if there were no other pain in hell,

The company alone that the damned find there would, to my mind, make a hell in itself.

That there is comfort here on earth in having a companion when one is ailing is true enough, provided the companion is a sympathetic one. But in hell things are quite different. If there were no other torment there except having to live in the society of the damned, that alone would make an intolerable

hell for souls. For, reflect a moment on what occurs here on earth. Many a one has all his pleasure spoiled, even in the most agreeable society, if one happens to be present against whom he has a grudge, especially if the two enemies, who cannot bear the sight of each other, happen to sit together. Oh, then the best meats lose their savor, the choicest drinks become insipid; every word uttered by the one is a thorn in the side of the other; the hours seem lengthened into years by the efforts at enforced courtesy that have to be made to keep up appearances. And yet either, if he chose, might get up and go away.

What torment it must then be for two or more who are at enmity to have to live together, as is often the case in unhappy marriages! Infallible is the truth spoken by the Holy Ghost: "It is better to dwell in a wilderness than with a quarrelsome and passionate woman." And there is not a doubt of it. I often think with heartfelt pity of the poor man who is tied to such a disagreeable partner; he hears nothing at home but nagging and complaining, scolding and abuse; so that he is forced to go out of the house to get a little quiet, nor does he come home except with the greatest reluctance and counting the hours till it is time for him to go out again. And still greater is the pity I feel for the poor wife who, good and innocent as she is, must live with a husband who is addicted to drink, or, what is worse, is unfaithful to her, and ill-treats and beats her as if she were a servant or a dog. Deserving indeed of pity is the poor woman who, when she hears her drunken husband knocking at the door, trembles in every limb, and has to make up her mind, as she knows by sad experience, to be dragged along by the hair, or kicked, or beaten. Unhappy companions, I think with deep sympathy, when husband and wife regard each other with mutual hatred and aversion; when both drink to excess and curse and abuse each other, and fight and tear each other by the hair; and yet all have to live together.

Far greater shall be the torment caused in hell by the society

of the damned. According to Job, it is a land "where....no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth" (Job. 10 : 22). Just as in heaven the blessed, united by an eternal and perfect love of God, rejoice in each other's happiness, and thus receive an accidental and continual joy from the company in which they are, so, on the contrary, in hell, the dwelling of disorder and confusion, the damned shall regard each other with hatred and aversion, and thus add to the torments they have to suffer. Now, if it is reckoned as a hell for two married people to live together in strife and hatred, what must that hell be where there are millions of damned together, who regard each other with the utmost rage and hatred, where the presence of the one is intolerable to the other, and yet they have no hope of being separated for all eternity, but must live together, amidst incessant cursing and imprecations, tearing, biting, and rending each other in their fury?

But shall not those boon companions, those jovial souls who spent the time so pleasantly together on earth, shall not they find some alleviation of their misery in being together in hell? And they who were inflamed during life with an impure passion so that they could hardly bear to be separated for one hour, and were ready to share all they had, nay, to give up their very lives for each other, shall they have no consolation or pleasure in being together in hell, in seeing that their torments are shared between them? For we know that people of that kind are wont to comfort each other in sorrow, and thus to lessen considerably the weight of the blow. Shall it not be so, I ask, in hell? Nothing of the kind! All this intimacy and friendship, this love and confidence, shall disappear amongst the damned, or, to speak more correctly, this former love and confidence, intimacy and friendship, shall rather increase their mutual hatred and aversion, their madness and despair, their curses and imprecations. A certain prince who was taken prisoner in battle, seeing his captor standing before him, cried out with averted

countenance: take away that man out of my sight, or else have pity on me and strike me dead! Unhappy sinner! how many thousand times you will wish to die in hell; or, since death will then be an impossibility for you, what a great alleviation you would think it to have that person removed from your sight whom you now call your treasure and the idol of your heart! But all in vain; you will be able to curse and revile that hellish fury, but her society you will never be freed from for all eternity.

How will it be, then, with those who lived together on earth in lawful, honorable, dutiful love, such as should exist between man and wife, father and son, mother and daughter, brothers and sisters, friends and relations? Will not these, at least, if they are together in hell, console each other somewhat in their misfortunes by mutual sympathy? No; in that place, where there is no order nor reason, but eternal confusion, all friendship and relationship, all love and sympathy, shall lose their names and be changed into bitter anger and hatred, especially if one of the formerly beloved persons was the occasion of sin to the other. Accursed wife, the husband will cry out in rage and hatred, must I have you always at my side to increase my torments? Would that I had never seen you, for then I should not perhaps be here; for your sake I often forgot my duty to God and my own conscience; to save you trouble or to retain your affection I have often done what I knew to be unlawful; to maintain you in idleness, frivolity, wasting your time paying and receiving visits, gambling, and amusing yourself, extravagance in dress, I have had recourse to unlawful means to make money, and have been obliged to withold from Jesus Christ, in the persons of the poor and needy, what belonged to him by right. And you, accursed husband, the wife will exclaim, you are the cause of my eternal damnation, because you allowed me too much liberty, or encouraged me to lead a vain, unchristian life; for your sake I have neglected many acts of devotion, in-

dulged our children in all kinds of vanities and pleasures; the drunken and debauched habits that led you so often into leaving me alone at home with the children, the cruelty with which you acted toward me, as if I were your servant or your dog, drove me to sadness and despair, and to many sins that sprang therefrom, and finally into this abyss of hell!

Accursed son, a father will say, it is on your account that I am damned, for I often sacrificed my conscience in my anxiety to provide for your future; frequently had I made the resolution of restoring ill-gotten goods to their lawful owners, as I was bound to do by the divine law, but my inordinate love for you deterred me each time, and I am now in hell. Accursed father, the son will reply, you, rather, are the cause of my ruin; if you had kept me under better restraint, and led me in my youth to fear God, and kept me away from sin and dangerous occasions; if you had taken more care of my spiritual and less of my temporal needs; if you had not prevented me from following my religious vocation, I should now be in heaven. Accursed daughter, a mother will say, my foolish love for you has been my ruin; I allowed you to spend your time in idleness, vanity, and worldliness, and did not chastise you for your bad and scandalous conduct! Truly, accursed mother, the daughter will reply, you should have kept me in check; it was your duty as a mother; if you had been a good mother I should not now be in hell; the bad example you gave me, the dangerous company into which you brought me, the pride you inspired me with, the vanity in dress that you encouraged or permitted in me, has brought me to eternal ruin.

The Catholic Church permits married people who have a great aversion for each other to be separated as far as living together is concerned, although the marriage-tie can never be dissolved; and she does so through a compassionate desire of saving them from the heavy cross they would have to carry in being in each other's company. Oh, if the damned had that

consolation, and could separate themselves from their hated companions, and hide away in some crevice of the earth to suffer their hellish pains by themselves, they would be freed from one of their worst and most bitter punishments! But for all eternity the reprobate shall behold his hated companions, and gnash his teeth against them with rage and despair, and be filled with unconquerable loathing for them; but all his desires to be freed from them shall be unavailing, for "the desire of the wicked shall perish."

How foolish to comfort one's self with the thought of the company to be met with in hell! Do you talk and mock in that style when, for instance, a fire breaks out and consumes a whole street, and your own house is burnt with the rest? Then every one of you would run out at once and leave everything for the sake of saving dear life, regardless of the poverty and distress that must ensue from the loss of property. Now, in such circumstances why do not people say or think: what is it to me? Even if I do lose my life by fire, I shall not be the only one; I shall have many companions in misfortune. It is only when there is question of the eternal ruin of the immortal soul, of the eternal loss of the joys of heaven, of an eternal fire with the demons in hell, that men can laugh, and joke, and comfort themselves with the thought of the companions who are to share in their damnation, and who must suffer the same loss, the same ruin, the same eternal pains. Then they can say: I am not the only one. Truly, sinner, you shall not be alone in hell; for many, very many, nay, the majority of men, shall be there with you; if you were there alone there might still be some consolation for you; but as it is, the society of so many shall be a new and an intolerable hell for you; the multitude of the damned increases the pain of each one of them.

Reflect on this, oh, you who are now in the proximate occasion of sin, so that the fear of being condemned to that unhappy company may urge you to give up that sinful intimacy. Reflect

on this, you who by unchaste songs and conversation, or impure books, or diabolical teaching, or vain and scandalous dress, or by giving bad example, are in any way the means of leading the innocent astray, and are thus actually adding to the number of the reprobate, to your own greater future torment. Reflect on this, you who are now so fond of dancing, debauchery, drunkenness, and gambling.

Reflect on this, oh, parents! when you take with you or allow your sons and daughters to go into dangerous society. Reflect on this, you married people who have lost your mutual love for each other, and have thus embittered your lives! Reflect on this, all you who have to live or deal with any persons to whom you have an aversion; think, I say, in order to preserve yourselves in Christian meekness and humility, and to turn to the good of your souls the annoyance you experience from such persons: ah, why should I trouble myself about these people? They are not by any means as bad as the society of the damned in hell. May God keep you and me from that terrible fate, that we may never know by experience what a fearful torment, what an intolerable hell is the company of the damned in hell. Amen.

Fifth Sunday of Lent.

THE JUSTICE AND MERCY OF GOD IN CONDEMNING THE SINNER.

"*Which of you shall convince me of sin?*"—John 8: 46.

If it is true that the mercy of God is infinite, that the works of his mercy exceed all his other works; if it is true that "his mercy endureth forever," as David repeats twenty-seven times in the 115th psalm, how, then, can it be that God will thunder forth

against the sinner for one mortal sin that terrible sentence to everlasting fire and to the torments of hell? Is not that unjust, nay, cruel? It is blasphemy to think and say this. "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" asks the Lord. True, it seems incomprehensible, and yet it is in reality right and just; it seems to contradict the infinite love and mercy of God, and yet even therein he shows his love and mercy, as I shall now prove in this sermon.

I. In sentencing the sinner to eternal fire, God shows his equity and justice towards the dead: how great must be the malice of sin.

II. He shows thereby his goodness and mercy, love and kindness towards the living.

I. Is it right for one sin to punish a poor mortal in such a terrible manner? For one sin that may have lasted but a moment to inflict an everlasting punishment in eternal fire? For a false oath, for instance, or a curse uttered in earnest from which a person derives no profit whatever? for a scandal given, although there may not have been the least intention of leading others into sin? Can it be right or just to punish such sins with eternal fire? Every law says that the chastisement should, as far as possible, be in proportion to the crime, and not be greater than the criminal deserves. Now, if the pleasure of the sin be so short-lived, how can the punishment be terribly and almost infinitely severe? If the sin is momentary, how can the punishment be eternal and incessant? If the sin is committed with the will alone, how can the punishment, and that, too, an eternal one, be inflicted on both soul and body? What proportion is there between a moment and eternity? between such a wretched, short-lived pleasure and everlasting fire?

1. To represent in some degree to our weak understanding the justice of this sentence, I will tell you that it is a common saying that no injustice is done by acting toward a man accord-

ing to his will. He who can choose between good and bad and deliberately selects the latter, cannot complain of being ill-treated; if he did so we might say to him: why did you not make a different choice? You were at liberty to do so. He who voluntarily and without compulsion takes up a heavy load cannot have the least right to say that people oppress him. It is no doubt very painful to burn in a fire; but if I wilfully leap into it, or compel another to throw me in by violence, can I say that I am treated unjustly and cruelly? No; let the punishment be as severe as you wish, the man who undergoes it has no right to complain if he chooses it himself. Now, who is there to compel a man to go into that terrible fire of hell? Has not every one the free choice of making his eternal dwelling in heaven or in hell? God "hath set water and fire before thee: stretch forth thy hand to which thou wilt. Before man is life and death, good and evil; that which he shall choose shall be given him." You must either keep the commandments of God, and then heaven is yours: "If thou wilt keep the commandments,....they shall preserve thee" (Ecclus. 15 : 17, 18, 16); or else, if you are not pleased to do that, hell is the place appointed for you. The reprobate man, before things came to such a pass with him, knew all this very well; why, then, did he choose hell? Who forced him to commit sin? No one but himself. So that he did not wish to be better off. And even if there is such a great difference between a momentary pleasure and eternal sorrow, is it not in your power and mine, oh, sinner! to enjoy the pleasure, or to reject it? Therefore you are indeed foolish and mad to purchase it at such a dear price; but God is and remains just in demanding the payment agreed on for it, and in chastising you with the rod that you knew well he had in readiness for your crime.

2. Again, the sinner forces the God of justice, and, so to say, compels him by violence, to condemn him to hell. How so? God seeks and desires nothing more than that man, by keep-

ing the commandments, should escape hell and be eternally happy in heaven; to that end he gives us so many warnings to be on our guard against the fire of hell, and he threatens us with that terrible punishment that fear may urge us to work out our salvation. And how long does he not wait for the sinner? how often does he not, as it were, beg and pray, and urge him to come back, promising to receive him again as his dear child? Is not that a clear proof that the good God does not wish the sinner to be lost? Now, if in spite of all this the sinner obstinately persists in wickedness, and continues to be the enemy of God; if he says, by his actions: I do not wish to be free from sin; I know that eternal fire is my doom; let it be so; let me go to hell; it is nothing to me; then is the Lord God, on account of his infinite holiness and justice, which do not allow him to leave wickedness unpunished, compelled, as it were, to do what he is unwilling to do, and to condemn to hell that man whom he would willingly have had with himself in heaven. Hence the man cannot complain of being unjustly treated, or say that his punishment is too great, for he himself has wilfully chosen that punishment. Besides, on account of his infinite majesty, God has full power and authority to compel man, under pain of eternal punishment, to obey his law. We must look, not at the crime committed, but at the Person who is thereby insulted and offended. The malice of a mortal sin is in a certain sense infinite, because it is an offence against the infinite majesty of God, who is worthy of infinite honor, fear, and love. Now, if the punishment is to equal the guilt, mortal sin deserves infinite punishment, because its guilt is in a sense infinite, and if the sinner departs this life unrepentant and without being reconciled to God and atoning for his sins, he is justly condemned to suffer never-ending pains and torments.

3. This punishment is right and just, because with reason is the chastisement eternal, since the guilt can never be blotted out. You know what goes on in the workshop of the artist who

is making a statue out of metal; while the furnace is glowing, the metal melting, and the tools all in readiness, he can make whatever statue he pleases—a man, an angel, a lion, a devil. But when the metal has been already poured out and has grown cold, can he then improve on or change the statue that has just been made? No; as it comes from the mould so it must remain. Christians, as long as we are in this life we are like the molten metal, and can become a likeness of God by grace, or a likeness of the devil by sin; when death comes the casting is over, and we retain the figure we receive therein, that is, in our last moment. If it is the diabolical figure of a reprobate sinner it cannot be changed any more, and the sinner is no longer in a state to do proper penance or to awaken a meritorious contrition for his sins. Nay, the reprobate are not only incapable of meritorious contrition and sorrow, but for all eternity they will retain obstinately and pertinaciously the wicked will in which they died. Although they know that God is their only happiness and is worthy of all love, they will hate and curse him forever. From this again the conclusion is evident: since the malice of sin lasts forever, God must hate and punish it forever; and since the sinner, now obstinately persisting in his wickedness, does not cease to be wicked and to curse his Creator, neither can God cease to take vengeance on the sinner. Consequently it is and must be true that eternal fire is meet chastisement for even one mortal sin.

II. Now, when we consider the matter duly, we shall see that God has given us no clearer proof of his will to make us happy, no more powerful means to compel us, so to speak, to attain happiness, than the threat to punish us with eternal fire if we refuse to do his will, to fulfil his desire to have us in heaven. For when I hear a father saying to his son, with a friendly, smiling countenance: my dear child, be good, conduct yourself becomingly, and you shall remain with me always, and I shall

leave you a hundred thousand dollars in my will; and threatening him, moreover, with a serious face, saying: but if you lead a bad, scandalous, reckless life, and bring shame and disgrace on yourself before the world, and reject the inheritance I offer you, be assured I will disinherit you completely—what should I think of that father? That he is a cruel, unmerciful man, who is altogether too severe with his children, and takes pleasure in their misfortunes?

So does God, our heavenly Father, act toward us, his adopted children. He offers an eternal inheritance of infinite goods, an eternal heaven filled with all imaginable joys, as the reward of our obedience and service, and that, too, a short service, that lasts only as long as this mortal, uncertain life of ours. See, he says to every one; take upon you my sweet yoke; remain faithful to me only for a short time; love me and keep my commandments; I will give you help and grace enough to do what I require of you; if you go wrong now and then, come back to me and do penance; my sole desire is to make you happy in that way forever; even in this life you will have a most sweet consolation, and rest, and joy of conscience; hereafter you shall be where I am myself as your eternal reward. But if you refuse me that short service, if you abandon and insult me, although I have given you no occasion to do so, and persist in your obstinacy till death, and thus prevent me from fulfilling my desire to make you happy, then I will cast you into the lake of fire, in which you shall burn forever without hope of release. You must either go to heaven, where I wish you to be, or else suffer for eternity in hell.

Since God earnestly desires to make all men happy, he is compelled to threaten us with that grievous penalty; so that they who refuse to be led gently by love and the desire of a reward may at least be driven into heaven by violence through the fear of eternal punishment. And hence in this respect we owe the Almighty our sincerest thanks for his great goodness

and mercy in thus menacing us with hell-fire, and compelling us to work out our salvation, to avoid evil, to strive after virtue, in order to be happy with him forever in heaven. But even the threat of hell is not powerful enough to curb the madness and folly of most men; in spite of it they refuse to serve such a well-meaning God; they will not allow him to drag them to heaven even by the fear of such a penalty. There is a hell and an eternal hell, and yet there are sinners who offend God! There is an eternal hell; Christians know it, and yet that hell is daily filled with Christians! How is it that such wretched creatures are to be found whose doom is already sealed? who while I speak of them are actually immersed in those hellish flames? Is it possible that there are amongst us some whose lot will be to be buried in that hell fire? Ah, truly the majority of us should be there now if God had dealt with us according to our merits; and most men shall one day burn in hell forever, because, in spite of all warnings and threats, they recklessly persist in sinning.

Do you all believe in hell? What! you exclaim: We are good Christians and Catholics, who learn from our faith that the eternal fire of hell is an infallible truth. That I am well aware of; but still I ask the same question: do you all believe in this truth? It cannot be that you believe it. True, you all say with the lips, I believe. But you disprove your words by your actions. Those men and women live on without care or uneasiness in their old vices; they, too, say, I believe in an eternal hell. That dissolute man who does nothing but curse and swear at every one in the house, who spends in drinking what should go to the support of his wife and family, he believes in an eternal hell. That young man, that husband, who day and night seeks the gratification of his sensual desires, who is still in the proximate occasion of sin, persisting in an unlawful intimacy: he believes in an eternal hell. That young girl who keeps bad company, and is an occasion of unlawful desires to

many by her extravagance in dress, thus placing a stumbling-block in their way: she believes in an eternal hell. Those people who consume the days and years of their lives in idleness, seeking one amusement after another, and utterly ignoring and forgetting God: they believe in an eternal hell. Those people who sacrifice their souls for a wretched gain, or to gratify some evil passion or inclination: they believe in an eternal hell. Those sinners who go to confession, who never truly repent of their sins, nor amend their lives: they believe in a hell, in an eternal hell, in the everlasting fire of hell. But how is that possible? Why do you believe what God says if you do not fear what he threatens? Are you, then, able and willing to endure the terrible fire of hell for all eternity? No, they all answer; we have neither the power nor the will to do that. But the Son of God assures you that the life you are leading brings you straight to hell.

And why should you not believe it? Is it not an article of faith taught by the true Church, as well as all the other articles? It is as true as that we must all die. It is as true as that there is one God, and in that one God three Divine Persons. Have you, perhaps, lost all faith? Formerly, while you were still good and pious, you believed firmly that there is an eternal hell for impenitent sinners, because God has revealed it. Is there, then, in your opinion, no hell any more because you live wickedly? Because you have so often deserved the fire of hell? Because you wish to sin without fear of restraint? If we knew of hell only on the authority of some profane historian worthy of credit, who has handed down the tale to posterity; if it was only a tradition that there is an eternal hell; nay, if we had only some reasonable grounds to suspect the existence of such a place for the punishment of the impenitent sinner, even then every sensible man should shudder with fear and anguish at the bare thought of the possibility of his being hurled into such a terrible fire. Such a fearful evil, if it be true, should certainly

act as a restraint on every one, and be an incentive to all to lead good lives for a short time, lest they be cast into that place of torments. But it is a truth revealed by God, who is infallible; a truth that all the faithful have up to this firmly believed; and you do not believe it? And you do not believe it, although you have deserved hell? Oh, woe! I repeat; woe to those who have to learn by experience what hell is before they believe in it! Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY.

THE HOPE IN AND TRUTH OF OUR FUTURE RESURRECTION.

"*He is risen.*"—Mark 16:6.

Ye holy women, why do you spend so much time seeking Jesus amongst the dead? He has indeed suffered much; he was nailed to the cross, and at last died on it; he was buried, too, in this place. "You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified," in order to show to him the last honors; but "he is risen; he is not here;" you will see him, as he himself told you, in Galilee. "Go, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there you shall see him as he told you." Christ is really risen from the dead. But how can that be a comfort for us? Our Head may be in glory, really living again; what better are we, the members he has left behind, if we have to rot away in the grave and remain dead forever? But, no; our bodies shall indeed decay in the grave, but we shall not die forever according to the soul.

We shall all truly rise again from the dead.

As the foundation of our faith is the resurrection of our Lord from the dead according to the body, so the foundation of our hope is our own resurrection from the dead according to the body. A Christian should always keep this truth deeply impressed on his mind; for it assures him that if he serves his God faithfully here below he shall one day be happy, body and soul, with God for all eternity. The truth is the bridle which powerfully restrains us from evil, the spur which drives us on to do good. This is the truth which, when well considered, embitters to us all the foolish joys of earth, and sweetens the sorrows and trials of this short life. And what would it profit us to live even for a moment amongst the troubles of this life, if we had not the hope of living forever in heaven? Who would have the courage to take crosses and trials from the hand of God and bear them with patience and cheerfulness, if the mortified and emaciated body must rot forever in the grave and never get any reward for its penitential practices? Then might we say: "We are born of nothing, and after this we shall be as if we had not been. Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present. Let none of us go without his part in luxury: let us everywhere leave tokens of joy: for this is our portion, and this is our lot" (Wisd. 2 : 2, 6, 9); let us eat, drink, and enjoy ourselves while we have time; for when death comes we shall have neither joy to hope for nor sorrow to fear.

But we have a far better assurance than that from our faith in the resurrection of our Redeemer, and we know that we shall live forever, body and soul, according to the words of St. Paul: "And we will not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that are asleep, that you be not sorrowful, even as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them who have slept through Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thess. 4 : 12, 13). Our Lord declares: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, that the hour cometh....when the dead shall

hear the voice of the Son of God. All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God: And they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life: but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5 : 28, 29). And again: "This is the will of my Father that sent me: that every one who seeth the Son, and believeth in him, may have life everlasting, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John 6 : 40). Now, can our Lord deceive us in what concerns our reward and resurrection to eternal life? Utterly impossible! We have a faithful God, who cannot otherwise foretell things but as he knows they will occur.

Go in thought to the dead daughter of the ruler of the synagogue, to the widow's son of Naim, to Lazarus, whose body had already begun to decay in the grave. The first of these Jesus took by the hand while he was still in the mortal body. The second case cost him just as few words. In the third case he only spoke somewhat louder. The command of this voice was enough to bring back the souls and unite them with the bodies they had left, and they who were dead became alive again in the presence of many spectators. At the death and resurrection of Christ did not many bodies, which had already long crumbled into dust, and whose ashes had been scattered over the earth, come out of their graves and appear living in the city of Jerusalem? If the Son of God was then able to do so much by merely speaking a few words; if the servants of God afterwards had the power of raising the dead by the bare mention of the name of Jesus Christ, must the same Son of God have less might and power over the dead when he will cite them before his judgment-seat, although we cannot understand how he will do that? Again, consider the stars in the firmament, the birds in the air, the fishes in the sea, the animals and men on earth, and yourself amongst them; where do they come from? A few thousand years ago they were not. Ask them

who is the Master of all those creatures, and they will all answer you: "Know ye that the Lord he is God; he made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. 99 : 3).

Poor Job did not require all those proofs. Hear this wonderful man preaching from his dung-hill as from a pulpit: "Who will grant me that my words may be written?" so that all may be able to read them. "Who will grant me that they may be marked down in a book with an iron pen, and in a plate of lead, or else be graven with an instrument in flint-stone?" that they may never be obliterated or forgotten. With what dignity this holy man commences his discourse! Certainly the doctrine he is about to deliver must be most weighty and worthy to be deeply impressed on the minds of men. And what is it? "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth, and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God, whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another" (Job 19 : 23-27).

I conclude in the words which St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians after he had explained to them the resurrection of the body: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and immovable: always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15 : 58). Again: "Denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world; looking for the blessed hope and coming of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (Tit. 2 : 12, 13). Upwards with your thoughts and desires! "Seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God; mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth" (Coloss. 3 : 1, 2). Why do we grub so long like moles in the mud of this vale of tears? The earth is not our lasting habitation; we have a far happier fatherland, to which we approach as traveling pilgrims nearer and nearer every day, to live there forever. If things go well with us for a time

here below let us say to ourselves: after all, what is the good of all this? These are not the joys that can content me; unhappy indeed should I be if I had nothing better to expect! And if what the world calls adversity assails us, then let us think: after all, what does it matter? This is not the place where I am to find happiness, and my tears shall not flow very long; the resurrection, the divine life, a blissful immortality which Jesus Christ has won for me by his Passion and death awaits me. With this hope I will console myself in the time of suffering; with this hope I will arm myself against all temptations, that I may never offend my God; with this hope I will daily spur myself on to serve God truly and constantly to the end according to my state and condition, that after my resurrection I may go body and soul "where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God." Amen.

First Sunday After Easter.

The Consolation to be Derived from the Resurrection in the Trials of Life.

"*He showed them his hands, and his side.*"—John 20 : 20.

Our Lord had frequently assured his Apostles that he would rise from the dead; they had the testimony of the angel, of the holy women, and of the soldiers on guard, and of a number of disciples who had seen him alive and spoken to him after the resurrection. Still, they were so filled with doubt and fear that they hardly knew what to think. Could he be really risen? They half doubted, half believed it. Thomas had fully made up his mind not to believe: "I will not believe" (John 20 : 25), he

said. Then Jesus, to remove all hesitation from their minds, appeared to them again and "showed them his hands and his side," as if to say: do you not yet believe? See, here are my hands with the wounds made by the nails which fastened me to the cross; here is my side pierced by the lance, with my heart still open. Then at last the disciples were convinced. "The disciples, therefore, were glad when they saw the Lord." Christ is truly risen; we have no doubt of it; we all acknowledge and confess it; nor can any Catholic doubt that it is an equally certain truth that, as Christ is risen from the dead, so we, too, shall one day arise from the dead. What a comfort for us in adversity and tribulation, what an encouragement in all the difficulties of life, to think: I shall one day arise to everlasting life! And this is the consolation I mean to speak of to-day.

Faith and hope in the future resurrection to eternal life can and should encourage us to overcome all difficulties, and to bear cheerfully all trials and voluntary mortifications.

If the hope of recovering his health, suggested by the doctor who gives him the medicine, is a source of consolation to the sick man who has lain in bed for whole months, and gives him courage to bear the discomforts of illness for a time longer; if the promise of freedom causes such joy to the prisoner that he bears much easier the severities of his prison, how much more should not a believing Christian be encouraged by the certain and infallible hope of a resurrection to an eternal, immortal, and perfectly happy life; so that he should bear with consolation and joy for a time longer the miseries of this short life, and willingly suffer with his suffering Lord?

We have sometimes many discomforts and miseries to suffer here, it is true; but what does it matter? Our suffering lasts but for a short time; so that we have just reason for adding to the discomforts of the body every day; for we are assured by God himself that we shall rise again in the same bodies and live

forever. And provided we have suffered here with our suffering Lord, what shall the bodies be like in which we shall arise? They shall not be mortal, corruptible, faulty, subject to heat, cold, hunger, thirst, weariness, and countless maladies and miseries, as they are now; but, according to St. Paul: "the dead shall rise again incorruptible: and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption: and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. 15 : 52, 53). The weak body shall become strong, the sickly healthy, the deformed beautiful, the wasting incorruptible, the suffering impassible; to say all in a few words: our bodies shall resemble the glorified body of Christ himself, for "we look for the Saviour, our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowness, made like to the body of his glory." And where shall my body thus live in beauty and glory? In what land shall it dwell? Our Saviour himself answers us: "Where I am, there also shall my minister be" (John 12 : 26); namely, in heaven, in the land of those joys and pleasures that no human eye has seen or heart can conceive; in riches without any fear of losing them; in dignity without envy; in rest without disturbance; in sweet love without jealousy; in authority without care or trouble; in satiety without disgust. Where I live, there must my servant live with me. Should not this hope impel us to crucify and chastise our body with its sensuality, after the example of the crucified and suffering Jesus, that we may be admitted to the companionship of his glory and majesty? Should not this hope at least encourage us to bear all the crosses and trials of this life with cheerfulness and patience for God's sake? What harm can all human suffering and misery do us since we expect such a great and glorious happiness? What injury have we to fear from any accident or misfortune since in the next life we shall possess all goods in abundance? What can death, with all the illnesses that may precede it, take away from us, since we have the certain hope that this very body of ours, although it must decay in

the earth for a time, shall rise again complete and live forever in a glorious eternity?

Holy Job, who, although he lived long before the time of our Lord, was not only infallibly certain in his faith, but was also filled with consolation by his hope. What made him so patient under his many sufferings and calamities, the least of which could have vanquished the greatest hero and thrown him into despair? Consider for a moment that wonderful man who was renowned in the Orient: "This man was great among all the people of the East" (Job 1 : 3), whom the world for a long time beheld in the enjoyment of all its goods and riches, its honors and comforts, surrounded by an illustrious and numerous family, waited on by a crowd of servants, honored by strangers as well as friends, in a word, fenced in, as Satan reproached him with in the presence of God, by temporal prosperity and happiness: see how in a moment he is reduced to beggary, all his cattle driven off by the enemy, his property destroyed by fire, his servants gone from him to find other masters, his houses thrown to the ground by the wind, his children crushed to death, he himself abandoned to all the rage and wantonness of the devil, and stricken in his body with such a grievous sore that he looked like a monster of deformity and a mass of corruption. In this extreme necessity, abandoned by his friends, mocked and cursed by his own wife, he was forced by the intolerable smell of his sores to go forth from the house and sit on the dunghill and scrape off with a potsherd the matter that flowed from his suffering body. Even the very stones might have pitied his miserable state! And yet in the midst of all these calamities, the bare mention of which makes us shudder, he sat there consoled and contented, blessing and praising God! Compelled by a natural feeling of sorrow, Job will indeed sometimes groan and sigh and complain and long for death; but never will he forget his dutiful obedience, submission, and respect for the Almighty God. He will encourage himself with his hope, and say:

I can see the dung-hill on which I am sitting, the worms that creep out of my sores, and the decaying flesh that falls from my bones; but at the same time "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth: and I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God." "This, my hope, is laid up in my bosom" (Job 19 : 25, 28).

What do you think of this, delicate Christians! who are so diligent in seeking your comfort, and cannot bear the least mortification? What do you think, pusillanimous and despairing souls, who complain so impatiently under the trials and crosses of life, as if all were lost? If misfortune or poverty deprives you of some temporal good, if sickness attacks and confines you to bed, if father or mother, husband or wife, child or friend is carried off by a premature death, or if the danger of death threatens you yourself, is all lost therefore? Nay, have you suffered any loss whatever? Let those complain of whom the Apostle speaks, those who have no hope, no expectation of a happy resurrection. Truly they have reason to complain, to murmur, to despair. But you, my dear brethren, who bear this hope about with you, why should you be disturbed at the loss of worldly goods, of earthly comforts, of a fickle health, of a mortal body? All these things are "momentary and light" (2 Cor. 4 : 17); they will be restored to us hereafter in far greater perfection with the assurance of never losing them for eternity.

What an agreeable sight it must have been before heaven to behold the seven Machabees, maimed in hands, feet, ears, and tongue, joyfully offering their mutilated bodies to be roasted alive! And the mother looking on at the martyrdom of her sons, not like the mothers of to-day, who weep and moan if the least accident happens their children, kept on crying out to them full of joy and consolation: Raise your eyes to heaven, my dear children! let them burn and maim you as they will: "The Creator of the world will restore to you again in his mercy

both breath and life, as now you despise yourselves for the sake of his laws."

They had but the light of the Old Law, and we, in the full blaze of the noon-day sun of the Gospel, show by our actions that we are blinder than they! What a shame for us who make profession of a religion which adores a crucified God who rose again from the dead, to be so weak and tender about ourselves, so anxious to fly the cross, so fearful of the least discomfort, not to speak of death itself, as if we had no faith in the resurrection! Anaxagoras was called on to defend himself against a man who wished to deprive him of a splendid property he had. "What!" he exclaimed; " are a few acres of land worth so much trouble? If I have to go to law it must be for something worth while." All his friends were indignant that he was so careless in such a matter, in which others were wont to spare no trouble; whereupon he raised his eyes to heaven, and pointing upwards, said: "That, that is my country, that is my inheritance; it is for the things that are there I care, not for those that are on earth." Could a Christian have given a better answer than that heathen? Meanwhile many of us have fine words on our lips, but quite different desires in our hearts, showing that we care far more for the things of earth than for the eternal goods that are above.

If we only had a lively faith and hope in the glory of the resurrection, we should rejoice when poverty takes away our temporal goods, or sickness or voluntary mortification weakens our bodies. We should think and say with a certain leper: "See, the fetters that keep me on this wretched earth are loosened more and more every day, so that I shall arrive in my fatherland all the quicker." A nobleman who had lost his way out hunting found himself alone in a forest, and knew not how to get out or what to do. Suddenly he heard a most sweet voice singing. Where can the song come from? he thought. Is it an angel's voice or that of a human being? He spurred on his

horse and rode towards the voice; and behold there came out of the thicket a poor, ragged leper, so misshapen and deformed that the nobleman could hardly bear to look at him; meanwhile the leper kept on pulling off the decaying flesh from his body. "Poor wretch!" exclaimed the noble; "who was singing so sweetly in the forest a few moments ago?" "It was I, sir," answered the leper. "What!" said the other; "can you, who have such cause to weep and lament, sing so cheerily?" "Yes, indeed! I have been singing through sheer joy and consolation; do you wish to know why? I know that the only wall that keeps me from heaven is this miserable body of mine; now the more I see it decay the nearer I come to the fulfilment of my hope that the wall will soon fall down altogether, and so I shall gain the rest and repose I long for. That is the reason why I sing so cheerily and bless God, who now mortifies my flesh, that he may restore it to me afterwards in another guise."

Would that we had only a lively faith and hope! But there is where we are at fault! The inordinate love we have for our flesh and sensuality, the inordinate desire of temporal things has so dimmed the faith in our hearts, that the future glory of the resurrection awakens in us but little pleasure, desire, or courage; or else if faith has still left some hope in us we try to persuade ourselves that we may arrive at that glory by an easier, more comfortable way than the rude way of penance and the cross, which Christ, our head, and all his saints have travelled. Oh, truly that is a self-deception that brings many a soul on the broad way that leads to hell! If Christ had found a more comfortable way to heaven than the way of penance and the cross he would certainly have chosen it, or at least have pointed it out to us, whom he loves even to death. But, "ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory" (Luke 24 : 26)? Then have we nothing better to hope for? Certainly not; the Apostle assures us: "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his

resurrection" (Rom. 6 : 5). Must we then necessarily suffer here below? Yes. Then I will suffer here, either by voluntary mortification of my body or by patiently bearing the crosses and trials which God will send me; and I shall be comforted and strengthened in this resolution by the certain hope of a resurrection to eternal glory.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE PROFIT WE CAN DERIVE FROM THE CONSIDERATION OF THE TRIALS OF THE JUST AND THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED, AS FAR AS THE RESURRECTION IS CONCERNED.

"*I am the Good Shepherd: and I know mine, and mine know me.*"—John 10: 14.

Jesus Christ is our good Shepherd, who gives his life for his flock. Now, if we wish to be good sheep we must follow this Shepherd, no matter where he leads us, through thistles and thorns, as well as through flowers and roses. This Shepherd has gone before us, suffering and sorrowing; we must be ready to follow him, as St. Peter warns us in to-day's Epistle: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 1 : 21). But let us be comforted! The same Shepherd has also gone before us in his glorious resurrection to eternal joys; if we follow him in the path of suffering we shall also follow him in the glory of his resurrection to heaven, and that is the end our Lord has in view when he sends the good and pious many trials and crosses, while he allows sinners and the wicked, who have no hope of a glorious resurrection, to abound in temporal prosperity. Nay, that very decree of divine Provi-

dence should confirm our faith and hope in the future resurrection to the joys of heaven, as I shall show; and I take as the basis of my discourse the two contraries, namely, the trials of the just and the seeming happiness of the wicked, as follows:

I. That the good in this world live in suffering, while the wicked abound in prosperity, strengthens our faith in the future resurrection to heaven.

II. It confirms our hope in the resurrection to heaven.

III. It inflames our love and desire for the resurrection to heaven.

I. The wickedness of the sinner comes chiefly from want of faith in a future life. How comes it that we find so many Catholics who are at least half atheists? I allude to those who live according to the senses, who trouble themselves least of all about how they stand with God, who put in an appearance at church through worldly motives and for fashion's sake, while they remain in the state of sin from year's end to year's end. They have no faith, or at all events a very weak and cold faith, in a future life, in which the just shall have eternal joys in heaven, while the wicked shall be tormented forever in hell. They know by daily experience that we must all die; but they imagine that death is the end of all things, and hence they say with the wicked in the prophecy of Isaias: "Let us eat, and drink, for to-morrow we shall die" (Is. 22 : 13); let us enjoy the good things of this world as long as we can, for we may soon die, and then we shall have nothing more to expect. They often, indeed, read, or hear in sermons, when they come to listen to them, of a happy or unhappy eternity after death; but they imagine those things to be an empty dream, or idle threat, or a baseless fiction. They have gone so far in sin and the blindness it causes that they are like the wicked of whom David speaks: "God is not before his eyes: his ways are filthy at all times" (Ps. 10 : 5). What is the result of that? "Thy judg-

ments are removed from his sight." If they had a lively faith in an eternal heaven and an eternal hell, how could they thus possibly squander away their short lives in sin, and pay for a fleeting pleasure by an eternity of pain? No; you may say what you please; it is clear that in those people there is a want of lively faith.

1. Now the prosperity of the wicked and the trials of the just confirm us in the belief that there must be a future life. It is certain that the wicked man commits many sins and that the just man does many good actions in his life. Good works merit a reward, and bad ones punishment even in worldly justice. God could not be God if he were not just; he could not be just if he allowed sin always to go unpunished, if he allowed supernatural good works to go always unrewarded. Now, many sinners live in prosperity and joys, in riches and abundance, a fact of which we complain, so that they are evidently not punished here below for their sins. On the other hand, a fact which we deplore, many good people live in sorrow and suffering, in poverty and distress, so that they are not rewarded for their good works here below; therefore, there must necessarily be after this life another life in which the wicked shall be punished and the good rewarded.

2. Again, it is certain that no sinner is so utterly reprobate as not to do some good act now and then. Now, as the good works of the wicked are rewarded here, and the sins of the just punished, the former must expect punishment, the latter reward elsewhere. As the sinner performs all his good works in the state of sin, they are and remain dead, and therefore God is not bound to give any reward for them unless the sinner does penance; yet he is such a liberal, generous God, that he will not allow even such works as these to be unrewarded, but repays them in abundance, and as he cannot do that in the next life, where hell awaits the unrepentant sinner, he does it in this life, by granting the sinner prosperity, riches, the joys and pleasures

of the world. On the other hand, there is no just man who has not either sinned formerly in his youth or does not now and then commit some daily venial sin. Now, where are they who do good here to enjoy their reward, and where are the wicked to receive punishment? "Son, remember," shall God say to the sinner, as Abraham said to the rich glutton in hell, "that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime" (Luke 16 : 25); therefore thou hast no further claims now; and if thou hast done any good on earth thou art already rewarded for it. Thou hast received wealth, health, pleasures, honors. I owe thee nothing further; thou hast received what thou didst seek. But now dost thou know how many sins thou art guilty of, for which thou hast not been paid during life? Now, therefore, it is thy turn to be in my debt; therefore thou art now tormented, and shalt remain so during my time, that is, for all eternity. Lazarus sat before thy door, a poor beggar amongst the dogs, suffering hunger and thirst, full of wounds and sores; thus he atoned for his sins, while he had not as yet received anything for his patience in bearing poverty and affliction, and for the other good works he performed for my sake; therefore "now he is comforted" (Luke 16 : 25), therefore now during my time he shall enjoy consolation and an exceeding great reward. Try to understand this, ye vain children of the world, who live in wealth, honor, and prosperity on earth, and yet do not serve God zealously in your good fortune, as you ought, but commit many sins; conclude from this that after this life an eternity of pain awaits you. See how the mystery of the unequal fate of the just and the wicked, which seems so hard to explain, actually helps to strengthen the basis of our faith in the resurrection to heaven. But besides that, it strengthens our hope in the resurrection to heaven.

II. Already in the Old Law the just grounded their hopes of an eternal life on the trials of this. I hear Job speaking of the happiness of the future life as if he were already assured of it

and had the title to it in his hand. "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth, and in my flesh I shall see my God" (Job 19 : 25, 26). Where? when? in what circumstances did he use those words? When he was the richest and greatest of the land? No, although he then served God in his first innocence, but when he was deprived of house and home, abandoned by all, lying on a dung-hill, covered with putrid sores, and bitterly complaining of his lot. The hand of the Lord has touched me; he has slain my children, taken my goods from me, and reduced me to extreme want. "His wrath is kindled against me, and he hath counted me as his enemy. He hath put my brethren far from me, and my acquaintances, like strangers, have departed from me. My kinsmen have forsaken me, and they that knew me have forgotten me. They that dwell in my house and my maid-servants have counted me as a stranger, and I have been like an alien in their eyes. I called my servant and he gave me no answer, I entreated him with my own mouth;" and he did not even deign to take notice. "My wife hath abhorred my breath;" she laughs at and mocks me. Yet after enumerating all those evils, he adds: "Who will grant me that my words may be written? Who will grant me that they may be marked down in a book with an iron pen, and in a plate of lead, or else be graven with an instrument in flint-stone?" For I know that my Redeemer liveth; I do not only believe it; I know and am sure of it; I know that I shall come to him, and that I shall see God in this flesh. Whence had he that certainty? He found it in his great misery, in the harshness with which God treated him here.

When did Tobias count himself among the chosen children of God? "We are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to them that never change their faith from him" (Tob. 2 : 18). Was it not when, after a holy life filled with works of mercy, he lay down to rest, wearied with burying the

dead, and the swallow's dung fell into his eyes and blinded him, while his friends came and mocked and ridiculed him?

If the just in the Old Law found such a sure foundation for their hope in the trials they suffered, how strong should not be the hope of pious Christians, since their trials are stamped and sealed by Jesus Christ himself, the king of the suffering, who by the testimony of his blood, as well as by word of mouth, assures us that crosses are title-deeds to the joys of heaven, and a sure pledge of eternal salvation? If our dear Lord had said in his Gospel that all who follow him and serve him zealously should escape crosses and trials, and be endowed with wealth, honor and pleasure, while he should reserve his trials for the wicked alone, then if we saw sinners enjoying prosperity and the good groaning under the weight of affliction, we should begin to wonder, to lose courage, and to despair of salvation. But when I read the Gospel and find that things are stated there quite differently; when we hear our Saviour saying clearly to his disciples: "You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice" (John 16 : 20); when we hear him enumerating all the persecutions, calumnies, scourgings, crosses, and torments in store for them, and at the same time exhorting them to remember his words that they may not be disturbed: "These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized;.... that when the hour shall come you may remember that I told you of them" (John 16 : 1, 4)—when we remember all this, and at the same time see by experience that those words are literally fulfilled, for as a general rule we find that the just are afflicted, while the wicked live in prosperity, then indeed we fear nothing as long as we serve God zealously; and even if we should be overwhelmed with afflictions we should not therefore lose hope, but rather comfort ourselves all the more in the thought of a glorious resurrection and eternal life. The same Son of God who has said to the just, "You shall weep," says also: "Blessed

are ye that weep now, for you shall laugh." The same Son of God who says, "You shall be hated by all men for my name's sake," says also: "Blessed shall you be when men shall hate you, and when they shall persecute you, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Be glad in that day and rejoice: for behold, your reward is great in heaven" (Luke 6 : 21, 23). Now, the Son of God is in all cases infallible, and as his prophecy concerning the trials of the just is true, so also must be that regarding the eternal joys reserved for them.

III. Our desires for heaven are inflamed by the afflictions we suffer. It is natural for one who is confined in a gloomy dungeon to long and sigh for his release all the more eagerly the greater the hardships and discomforts he has to endure. And it is also beyond a doubt that the trials and crosses of this life, in which we are confined as in a prison and vale of tears, excite a love and earnest desire for the joys of heaven, especially in those who groan most under the weight of affliction. Is it surprising that heaven should be so insipid and earth so agreeable to one who enjoys all the delights of the world according to the wishes of his heart? But on the other hand, consider the poor, oppressed servant of God sighing and moaning under the weight of the cross like another Job; you will hear him saying: "My soul is weary of my life" (Job 10 : 1). The day and night seem to me as long as a year; when shall it all have an end? When shall I attain the repose I long for? The persecuted David cries out: "When shall I come and appear before the face of God? My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said to me daily: Where is thy God?" (Ps. 12 : 3, 4.) St. Paul, overwhelmed with various trials, exclaims: "I am straitened: having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. 1 : 23). And one of the reasons that God has for leaving his faithful servants in affliction and suffering is, that

they may grow tired of and disgusted with earth and turn all their desires and aspirations to heaven.

But, vain children of the world! if you have any common sense left, you have not the least title to this eternal joy if you live as you have hitherto done; you have received your good things in this life. Oh, how poor you will be on that day! How confused you will be to see a poor peasant, or workman, or servant, a desolate widow, an orphan child whom you despised, nay, perhaps oppressed and persecuted, to see them entering into heaven and taking possession of everlasting joys, while you shall have to suffer in hell like the rich glutton, and to sigh when too late, like those of whom the Wise Man speaks: "These are they whom we had sometime in derision and for a parable of reproach;" whom we looked on as the dust under our feet, or as silly people who did not know how to live in the world: "Behold, how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the Saints." Fools that we are! we must lie in the midst of flames covered with shame and confusion forever and ever. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE JUSTICE AND SHORT DURATION OF THE TRIALS OF THE JUST AND THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED.

"*You shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice.*" —John 16: 20.

To whom does Our Saviour say that? To his Apostles and disciples, and with them to all pious, just, and chosen servants of God. "But the world shall rejoice." What is that world?

The wicked, perverse world, and all those who are attached to it and to its sinful customs, while they resist the holy teaching and maxims of the Gospel of Christ—that is, sinners and the wicked; they shall live in joy and abundance. I ask is that right? To weep and lament; is that the reward our dear Lord promises to the good? Joy and abundance; is that the punishment with which he threatens the wicked? If he had said quite the contrary—for instance, you, my children, shall enjoy prosperity, while the wicked, who despise me, shall suffer affliction —then we might have understood him. So we often think, my dear brethren, with secret envy and discontent, when we judge according to the dictates of the flesh and our sensuality. But we should not think so, for

I. That the just should live in afflictions here below and the wicked in prosperity is according to God's decree: therefore no just man should complain; but neither should the sinner persist in his evil ways.

II. The afflictions of the just aud the prosperity of the wicked last only a short time: therefore no just man should envy sinners their luck; but neither should any sinner boast of it.

Are we to believe that sin and vice is the road to temporal well-being? Yet it is from God that all blessings and goods must come. What more contradictory, then, than to maintain that to attain prosperity we must despise and offend him from whom all goods and graces must come. And if they alone who offend God enjoy wealth, health and prosperity, what poor, distressed mortal would not prefer to live in sin, that things might go better with him? If the pious, who serve God with zeal, are to be the only ones to suffer poverty, sickness, and contempt, what rich man would venture to do penance and run the risk of living in misery? But that is not the case at all.

On the contrary, sin and wickedness is the source from which all the miseries and troubles of life come.

Did not Saul in olden times gain a royal crown by his virtue and piety and lose it by becoming wicked? If David ever had to suffer misfortune, it was when he forgot his God and committed the shameful crimes of adultery and murder. When and how did the wonderful good fortune of Solomon begin to decline? Was it not when that king and his successors began to practise idolatry? "As long as they sinned not in the sight of their God it was well with them: for their God hateth iniquity" (Judith 5 : 21, 18). So that it is not alone those who lead bad lives who enjoy prosperity, although the world nowadays is apt to have recourse to unjust means to secure it; and the same just God still lives and rules the world, and iniquity is still hateful in his sight. And, alas! how many are there not in the world who have hardly a bit of dry bread to eat, and lead wretched lives in sorrow and affliction, hunger and want, and yet, because they are wicked and sinful, shall be cast into hell when the time comes to separate the wheat from the chaff! Sinners, do not persist in your evil ways! Wickedness is not the door to good luck and prosperity.

Yet many of the wicked abound in prosperity, while many of the just are severely tried. It is this inequality that generally causes us to murmur as at a thing that we cannot understand. Is it right, we ask, to see the rich glutton, whose only care is to gratify his appetites, seated at a well-spread table, while the righteous Lazarus lies at his doorstep, perishing with hunger and begging for the crumbs from the rich man's table, a charity that is cruelly refused him? What an intolerable thing to see men who have nothing of the Christian but the bare name, while they are no better than heathens in their lives and actions, enjoying such an abundance of all things, while true servants of God, who mean so well towards their Lord, have hardly enough clothes to enable them to make a decent appearance in

church! Can such an arrangement come from a God of infinite wisdom, holiness, and justice? Can he act so harshly towards his friends, while he is so generous to his enemies? We are not the only ones who entertain such thoughts. Even the holiest have found it hard to understand this. "I see," says St. Augustine, "before my eyes a most difficult problem" to understand—namely, how to reconcile the justice of God and his all-ruling providence with the claims of equity and right, when I behold sinners generally prosperous on earth, while the good are tormented by temptations, persecutions, and trials. "It is a most difficult thing to explain." The prophets of God studied the same point, and had to confess that it puzzled them. "Why," asks Jeremias in astonishment, "why doth the way of the wicked prosper; why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly?" Why is this, O Lord? This was the very thing that the heathens of old upbraided the Christians with. What sort of a God have you? said they. Where are his justice and goodness towards you? You are poor and despised; hunted from one city to another, tortured and persecuted and crucified alive. Is your God blind that he does not see those things? Or has he forgotten you, that he takes such little interest in you? He must be either unwilling or unable to help you; if he is unable, he is no God; if he is unwilling, it is to no purpose you serve such a merciless Lord.

Far from the Christian be such thoughts and complaints! Sufficient for us to keep us resigned should be the words in which David speaks of his doubts in this matter: "I studied that I might know this thing," I tried to find out the reason of it, but in vain; therefore I determined to suspend my judgment, to submit humbly to the divine decrees, and to wait "until I go into the sanctuary of God, and understand concerning their last ends" (Ps. 72).

Such should be our thoughts in circumstances which to our weak understandings appear strange and incomprehensible, so

that we may be always undisturbed and content with the will of God. Many other mysteries still more incomprehensible are proposed to us by our faith: for instance, the Blessed Trinity of Persons in one Nature, and that there is one only God in the three Persons; that Jesus Christ is here present in the smallest particle of a consecrated Host. How can such things be? is the question that my understanding sometimes asks. I cannot comprehend it. But is my not understanding it a reason for saying that it is not true, or for wavering in my faith? God forbid! I need only say to myself: God has said it; and then I can at once conclude with certainty that it must be true. Now, I am just as certain that God cannot ordain anything that is not right and just, as he cannot say anything that is not true. Therefore when I sometimes feel an inclination to bitterness of spirit on considering the prosperity of the wicked and the trials of the just, and am not able to explain the cause of either, must I then murmur and say that an injustice has been committed? May God preserve me from such thoughts! I should rather at once say to myself: God has so ordered it; it is his will; therefore it must be good, right and just (Matt. 11 : 26). "Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in thy sight." And in fact when I consider how short is the miserable joy of the wicked, I find that I have not merely no cause to complain, but also no reason for congratulating them, or envying them in the least.

II. Generally speaking, the complaints we make and the discontent we feel do not arise from our own wants nor from temporal goods as they are in themselves, but rather from a secret envy and spirit of grudging. If we men were alike in all things and no one had more than his neighbor, then we should all be satisfied, although no one might have much; for every one would think: it must be so. Again, if each one imagined he had something more or better than others, he would be not only content, but would esteem himself very fortunate. The peas-

ant who never left his native village, and who, on account of the extent of his lands, is obliged to keep a horse more than his neighbors, looks on himself as the richest and most fortunate in the whole place; but if he goes into the town and sees the rich equipages of the wealthy, alas! he thinks, poor man that I am! how rich the people are here! And he who was so happy before goes home discontented. Why? He is just as well off as before. Yes, but now he sees that others have more than he; and therefore his own condition now seems despicable to him.

In this matter we resemble little children. Suppose there are four or five of them together in a household; their mother gives them their breakfast as usual in the morning; each one gets a piece of rye bread, spread with butter, with a cup of coffee or milk, but all receive the same. They are all quite satisfied and fall to with great gusto, munching their bread with such eagerness that it quite gives one an appetite to look at them. But suppose now that one of the children, a brother or sister, perhaps on account of being more delicate than the others, gets a piece of white bread instead of rye, and may be a morsel of meat in addition, oh, what a to-do there is in the house about it! All is upset and in disorder; the little ones begin to cry and howl, and look with disgust on what they before liked so well. Why so? Is the rye bread more insipid to them or coarser than before? No; but the bit of white bread or meat given to one excites the envy of the others. Be still! children, says the mother; your brother is sick, and must perhaps soon take to his bed and die; and what more has he had than the rest of you, except a bit of meat? And as he has eaten it in a hurry, he has just as little as you now. Be satisfied with what you have. But it is all to no purpose; the brother may be sick or not; the others make no account of that, and they would rather be sick themselves, or pretend to be so, than get less than he.

Such is the way in which children act; but old people are

often not much better. They have the authority of age and the vices of youth. Our great Father in heaven distributes daily to us mortals his food and other goods, according to his own will; to one he gives more, to another less, and indeed, as we have seen already, those who seem to deserve it least receive the greater portion—that is, sinners and the wicked; and thereby arises much envy, grudging and discontent. Why does he get so much, asks the dissatisfied man, and I so little? He has white bread, while I have hardly enough black bread to still my hunger. He can drink the best of wine, while I have to be content with water. Everything prospers with him, while nothing goes right with me, although I have hitherto tried to serve my God faithfully. But, my dear children, you should be satisfied with what you have received, says the heavenly Father: "Envy not the man who prospereth in his way: the man who doth unjust things" (Ps. 36 : 7). Do not grudge him his good luck; he to whom I have given something on earth is weak and sick in his soul; he will soon die of his illness, and that, too, an eternal death: "For they shall shortly wither away as grass: and as the green herbs shall quickly fall."

And what has he received more than you, after all? Only a trifle! Oh, how false and wretched the happiness that disappears so speedily! With reason does St. Augustine exclaim: The wicked man is in truth never happy, "but he is thought so, because we do not know what happiness is." If the sinner prospers while the just man suffers, do not be uneasy on that account; for, I ask again, how long will it last? A very short while. "For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be, and thou shalt seek his place, and shalt not find it" (Ps. 36 : 10). You will look around for some traces of his former prosperity, but you shall not find any. See how fleeting that happiness is. Many now abound in splendor and magnificence, in honor and authority, in joys and pleasures, in riches and wealth; "they take the timbrel, and the harp, and rejoice at the sound of the

organ. They spend their days in wealth" (Job 21 : 12, 13), while pious, just Christians, on the other hand, are poor and despicable in the sight of the world; they are oppressed with labors and trials, and have to earn their bread in the sweat of their brow.

But be not troubled at this. Wait till the end, till evening comes, till the hour of death, and then you will find that the difference between you and the wicked will be a consoling one for you, but a very deplorable one for them. When your souls, laden with the merits you have acquired by your patience and good works, are awaiting joyfully to have the gates of heaven opened to them, the wicked shall, against their will, be stripped of their gorgeous trappings, and be thrust naked and wretched into a place where they never thought of entering. "They spend their days in wealth,"—and what becomes of them afterwards?—"and in a moment they go down to hell" (Job 21 : 13). The moment the breath leaves their bodies their souls are buried in hell. Oh, truly that is a sudden and terrible change! From a place of honor to a pit of infamy! From a splendid dwelling to the prison of hell! From a well garnished table to a lake of brimstone! From the soft down-bed to the burning coals, where their covering shall be flames of fire! From laughter and amusement to eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth! From joys to eternal woes! From the midst of their dear friends to the company of the demons and goblins of hell! How strange their first entry shall be to them! How long eternity shall appear to them, when their short-lived joys and pleasures have come to an end!

Hence the just must not envy the wicked their prosperity, but rejoice in their own trials. If it comes to such a wretched end with the wicked, who, then, should envy them on account of it, or complain that he has no share in it? Do not envy men the happiness they enjoy in this life, but rather condole with them, for, like dumb brutes fattening on the pastures, they are

hastening to the butcher. Just servants of God, rejoice even in the midst of your sufferings, in your poverty and persecutions! Much more desirable are your tears than the laughter and rejoicings of the world! Much better your poverty and destitution than the wealth and abundance of sinners. "Better is one day in thy courts, oh, Lord! than thousands in the houses of sinners," and therefore with our whole heart let us say with David: "I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners." Better to be the poorest and most abject amongst the suffering and weeping children of God than to dwell in the most magnificent palace amongst all the pleasures and enjoyments of the wicked!

Fourth Sunday After Easter.

THE CONSIDERATION OF OUR LAST END.

"*None of you asketh me: Whither goest thou?*"—John 16: 5.

A general and at the same time a rare question. A useless and at the same time a most important question. It is a general question; for whenever one acquaintance meets another in the street, the first word is: Where are you going to? A rare question; for you seldom find one who asks himself: Where am I going to? It is a useless question when proposed to others; for as a general rule it is prompted by mere curiosity, and deserves no better answer than: What is that to you? It is a most important question when one proposes it to himself; for the answer to it brings before us the most weighty, useful, and fundamental truths of our faith, the neglect of which causes the loss of most souls. Let us consider them for our mutual

benefit; and since man consists of two parts, body and soul, I shall propose them in a twofold question and answer, namely:

I. Whither goest thou? Thy body shall go into the grave.
II. Whither goest thou? Thy soul shall go into eternity.

I. As far as the body is concerned, our proper home is the grave. "My days shall be shortened," says Job, "and only the grave remaineth for me" (Job 17 : 1). Nothing shall remain to me of all the lands I have owned; nothing of all the houses I have lived in; nothing of all the money I have amassed, which has made me so important amongst men; the dark grave is all that I have to expect. Your beautiful dwellings and mansions, oh, rich ones of this world! do not belong to you, exclaims St. Augustine; "a man is but a guest in his own house;" he merely takes shelter in it for a short time. But the grave is his true dwelling; of that he can say with certainty that it is his house, for he shall remain in it and it shall belong to him till the last day.

Every day brings us nearer to the grave, and hardly is there one to be found to ask himself: whither am I going? The consequence of this neglect is that we set such a high value on temporal things and think so little of eternity. If we often reflected on this truth seriously and deeply: I am hastening to the grave, should we then plague ourselves so much with disturbing cares and wearisome toil for the sake of the mortal body, or to amass money, or enjoy the pleasures of life? In God's name, what is the use of such inordinate desires? Imagine that you are looking at a prisoner condemned to death; he thinks of nothing but filling his barns with corn, his cellar with wine; he wants clothes made in the newest fashion; as he is brought to execution he sees a fine house, and asks at once whether it is for sale and what is the price of it, as he wishes to buy it for himself. What would you think of such a man? Would you look on him as a wise man? Oh, fool! you would

say to him; do you know where you are going to? To the gallows, to the place of execution, where you will be hung by the neck for an hour. Why, then, do you trouble yourself about fine houses and grand clothes, about corn and wine? Look after your soul, and see what you can do to make it happy in eternity.

Now, all of us are condemned to death. Sentence is already pronounced on us: "It is appointed unto men once to die." Our life is the way to the place of execution, on which we are really led to death. Our life and body is a building that is eaten away by the rushing river; time constantly gnaws at and undermines the foundation; every moment we live takes away a piece of our lives; every breath we draw forces on another breath, until we come to the last. Thus the beginning of our life is also the beginning of our death.

Yet, although we are every day, hour, moment, hastening to death like condemned criminals; although our house is constantly being undermined by the rushing river and ready to fall; yet the most of us are principally, nay, almost solely occupied by our efforts to adorn and furnish the falling house, to pamper and fatten the body. That we may live comfortably in this house we work from morning till night, amassing money, buying land, building, going to law for the sake of a square foot of ground, as if a little world depended on it; while for the sake of a wretched handful of money our precious souls, God and heaven are freely staked. What arrant fools we are! A heathen philosopher complained of this long ago: "We know," he says, "that we are mortal and must die; that we are in daily danger of being surprised by death; yet our desires are as great as if we were immortal." It is not enough for us to have our daily bread, for which Christ taught us to pray, in order to preserve our lives; we wish for superfluities. Nor are we satisfied even with the superfluous; we long for still more. The care for the present day, to which Christ exhorts us, is not

enough; we take into account future and uncertain days, weeks, months and years, so that nothing may be wanting to us. Our desires are as great as if we were immortal; we do not think of where we are going; we forget that we are really on the road to death and that we are hurrying to the grave. For what else are you so careful in nourishing this flesh of yours but to give it to the worms? For whom do you heap up wealth if not for your descendants, to whom you must leave it? Is it not a foolish thing to build in a place in which we cannot remain? To spend so much labor in gathering together what we cannot keep possession of? Whenever you pass by the grave of a rich man, look around and see where are his riches and ornaments, his glory, his vanity, his luxury, his pleasure, or what remains to him of all these things. Nothing remains to him now but ashes, filth and worms. Imagine that you hear a voice from the grave crying out to you, and indeed the silence of the grave is eloquent enough: What you are now, I was; what I am now, you will be.

Yes, we know that we are going to the grave; but the way may be a long one; we may still have many years to pass in this world. Such are the thoughts of most people. They all acknowledge that they must die; hardly one thinks he will die soon. Each one looks at his grave as still many miles, many years distant from him. He who is young counts on his vigorous youth; he who is grown up on his manly strength; the old man trusts in his still robust health; every one finds something in his imagination to defend himself against the approach of death; and hence there are few who are disquieted by the question: whither goest thou? To the grave? Oh, it will be long before it comes to that with me! Supposing now, my dear brethren, that such is the case, and indeed it is true that some live longer than others, what difference does that make? There is no difference between him who has lived ten and him who has lived a thousand years, once the common end of all and the

inevitable doom of death has come upon them. Consider the years of the patriarchs of old; we think what long lives they had; but what of that, after all? Their years came to an end at last. They all died; one sooner, another later, but all of them had to pay the debt of nature.

But what have I said? That we are all like the criminals led to death? We are rather worse off, if anything; for they know at least for certain how far off their death is; they know the way on which they are going; they can count the steps they still have to take, and hence they can say how long they still have to live. Not one of us can know that much. The Lord has said to us that we must die; we know that we are going to the grave, but not a whit more. How long we still have to journey; how far off death is from us; let him who can guess that. "You know not the day nor the hour," says Our Lord (Matt. 25 : 13). And there is another thing we have from the infallible lips of God himself, that he will come like a thief unawares, at a time when we least expect him: "At what hour you think not, the Son of man will come" (Luke 12 : 40).

II. Two travelers were journeying together through a desert; the one had over ten thousand dollars in gold, the other had nothing but a piece of dry bread and a jar of water. The first began to suffer thirst, but knew not where to find help, because his companion had too little water to spare him any. At last he offered all his gold for a drink of water. The second, greedy of the money and anxious to become rich all at once, exchanged the water for the gold. But how foolish he was! The first drank the water and thereby saved his life; the second grew tired carrying the gold and perished of thirst. If he had kept the water he might have had the gold too, in time, for the first would have died and left it to him. But he did not think of that in time, and so his repentance came too late.

Where are you going? "Man shall go into the house of his

eternity" (Eccles. 12 : 5); that is, into that vast, infinite wilderness in which you shall find nothing but what you bring with you from here for your journey; in which there is no shelter for you, but what you have first built up for yourself, and no other life but what you have prepared for yourself here below. What will become of your wealth, oh, rich man? Will it go into eternity? But what good would it be to you there? That is a land in which money cannot buy anything. Woe to you, then, if you have made no other provision for the road; you shall surely suffer eternal hunger and thirst!

Hence we must provide in time, that we may have something to live on in eternity. What we neglect now we shall never be able to do hereafter. "Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good," as St. Paul exhorts us. How many years have we already spent in this world? What a long and beautiful time we have had of it during all those years! But where are the virtues, the good works, the merits that we should have collected and sent before us into the house of our eternity? Alas! if our journey were now brought to an end, and the great account-book, in which are written all our thoughts, words and actions, and all the years, months, weeks, days and moments of our lives—if that book were now opened before the judgment-seat, and examined so as to separate the good from the bad, the useless from the meritorious, what would then remain over for our souls?

How great, how deplorable the stupidity of us mortals! If we go to the country for a few days to enjoy ourselves we send out provisions beforehand; we roast and boil and make every preparation, although we could find food enough in the place itself if we wish to pay for it. And now we are already half way on our journey to a vast desert, to the house of our eternity, where we can buy nothing, find nothing, expect nothing, except what we bring with us; where neither money, nor treasures, nor learning, nor knowledge, nor art, nor dignities, nor

honors can help us in the least. Yet we make such little preparation, we think so little of this journey, that hardly once in a year do we ask ourselves: whither goest thou? Truly we are traveling as blind people! And if we occasionally make some provision for the road, that is, if we have performed some good works, gained some merits, we often act like the traveler of whom I have told you, who sold his jar of water; we sell our provisions, not for ten thousand dollars, but often for a wretched shilling of unjust profit, for a point of honor, for a moment of brutal pleasure, for the respect or love of some mortal creature! Thus we have lost all!

And how vain the repentance this folly of ours will entail, when we shall have come to the end of our journey and shall find nothing but our sins! When people enter on the married state without thought or reflection or seeking counsel from God, how bitterly they repent afterwards of their folly! Oh, would that I knew you before as I know you now, they say to each other; I would never have married you! Would that I had never laid eyes on that man! But all your wailings are of no avail; you should have thought of that before; it is too late to repent now; you must live with that man whether you like it or not. Yet be contented and have patience; you can still hope that death will put an end to your troubles. But if you have once entered into the house of your eternity and you find things wrong with you there, there is no help for you, no hope; what you have neglected here is lost forever and can never be replaced. "We fools," you will cry out, and with you all careless Christians for all eternity, "therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us;" all is lost and gone from us forever!

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

GOD'S EARNEST WISH TO SAVE THE SOULS OF ALL MEN.

"*Not becoming a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work: this man shall be blessed in his deed.*"—James 1 : 25 (from to day's Epistle).

Good Christians, you endeavor to do the will of God in all things, and have firmly resolved to do it to the end; therefore you are among those who are on the right road to heaven, and if you are true to your determination, you shall infallibly possess the kingdom of heaven. Go on as you are going, and be of good heart. Yes, many say, some of whom are pious and timid, while others are wicked and half despairing: how do I know what God means to do with me? whether he has enrolled me in the number of his elect who are destined for heaven? And if he does not want me there, what will all my efforts avail? These disturbing thoughts are encouraged by those whose doctrine confines the goodness of God in such narrow limits, as if he selected for heaven only those whom he has determined to bring there by predestination, as it is called, or a choice made of them from eternity. To help souls to lay aside this saddening thought, and to encourage all to serve the Lord with zeal and joy, I will now prove the contrary, and say:

God has an earnest, and, as far as he is concerned, an efficacious will to bring all men to heaven.

God has created all men for no other end but to be eternally happy; he has an earnest wish and desire that all should be

happy; he gives to all sufficient means to attain eternal happiness. And it is in this will that the vocation to heaven consists, of which our Lord says: "Many are called" (Matt. 20 : 16)—that is, all are called. This calling and earnest will of the Almighty to make all men happy has no regard to the merits and good works of men, but comes solely from the goodness and generosity of God. But as God has left men free, and will not force any one to go to heaven, but has resolved that each one should use the means provided according to his own free will, and thus gain heaven, so he has, besides the general will, another that rests on our co-operation and merit; namely, to grant heaven to man if he uses, as he can, the means provided, does good, and perseveres in the love and grace of God till the end of his life.

To illustrate this: Suppose there is a rich man who has no wife or children, and who therefore adopts a poor student, making him heir to all his property, an inheritance that the student cannot possess unless he takes it of his own free will, as all testaments require; for although I am made heir by will, I cannot be compelled to accept the inheritance; I am free to do so or not. Now, in this case it is evident that the first will of the rich man, by which he desired to make the student heir to his wealth, came simply from goodness and charity, without any reference to merit on the student's part; but the other will, by which he desires that the student should really take possession of the inheritance, is not absolute, but conditional, namely, if the student consents to take it. So does the Almighty act with us: that he created us, adopted us as his children, prepared the inheritance of heaven for us, and richly equipped us with all the means necessary to gain it, all that is an effect of the mercy and goodness of God, and we have contributed nothing whatever thereto; but the actual taking possession of heaven depends also on ourselves, and this latter God wills, not absolutely, but on condition that we accept and merit it. Now, as

future things are as clear to him as the present, if God sees that this or that man will use the means provided, keep his law, and persevere in his grace, then his wish and desire is fulfilled, and he says: that man shall possess my eternal kingdom. And in that decree and determination consists so-called predestination, or choice and election to heaven, of which again our Lord says: "Few are chosen."

From this it follows, first, that the smallness of the number of the elect does not arise from the fact that God only wishes a few to be saved, but rather from this, that only a few really wish to merit and accept eternal salvation. Secondly, all men can be in the number of the elect if they only wish earnestly to make use of the proper means, and to persevere in good to the end. Thirdly, God has no antecedent, absolute will to send any one to hell; he wills it only under this condition: if man, through his own fault, wills not to merit heaven, and so to be damned. Finally, when God determines to send any one, no matter who he is, to hell, he is, as it were, forced to do so; he does it, so to speak, with vexation, regret and against his antecedent, general will, by which he wishes and desires to make all men happy. All men are God's adopted children; he loves them more than any earthly father ever loved his offspring; he tells us so himself; and for all he has prepared eternal happiness. Now, if he finds among them rebellious, undutiful children, he does not at once on that account withdraw from them his fatherly care, as all sinners daily experience; he tries to convert them by making them uneasy in conscience, by temporal adversity, by secret inspirations and warnings, and he offers them his grace as before, if they return to him by true repentance and amend their lives; but if all this does no good, if they still continue to act as his enemies and remain impenitent until death, then he is forced, in order not to neglect his duty as Judge, to change his mind, as it were, and to exclude them from the number of his children, and imprison them for eternity. Hear how he com-

plains of this by the Prophet Isaias: "Ah! I will comfort myself over my adversaries, and I will be revenged of my enemies;" alas! I am at last forced to do this! "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not." Now I must do what I am very unwilling to do: "Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate" (Matt. 23 : 37, 38).

St. Paul speaks of this truth in terms so clear that they cannot be clearer: "I desire therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all men,. . . .that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all piety and chastity; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a redemption for all" (1 Tim. 2 : 1, 6). There he says not once, but several times, that God wills all men to be saved. God himself says the same to the prophet Ezechiel, and confirms it with an oath. "Say to them: As I live, saith the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live" (Ezech. 33 : 11). Now, if God does not wish to exclude even the sinner from heaven, whom should he then refuse to bring there? Truly, if any one on earth deserves to be abandoned by God the sinner deserves that fate, for wilfully and wantonly he sets himself against the divine majesty and openly insults it. After our Lord had spoken the parable of the good shepherd, who leaves the ninety-nine sheep and goes over hill and dale in search of the one that is lost, and when he finds it brings it back on his shoulders rejoicing, he adds these words: "Even so it is not the will of your Father, who is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt. 18 : 14). But if God does not wish that one of the least should be lost, that is, be damned forever, then he must necessarily

wish to save them all and make them eternally happy, for, excepting in the case of infants who die without baptism, there is no alternative between being lost forever and being eternally happy.

Again, if God had not signified anywhere in Holy Writ this wish and desire for the salvation of all men, then would I say to him who ventures to think the contrary what our Lord said to the obstinate Pharisees: "Though you will not believe me, believe the works" (John 10 : 38). If you do not trust my words, then look at the works I do; from them you must see that I am true God. In the same way I say: Oh, ye of little faith! if there are no words or arguments to convince you that God earnestly desires the salvation of all men, then believe his works at least; see what he has done for all men. God loves all men, and that, too, with a most tender love, precisely because he is their Creator, their Author and Father. Now, if God loves all men, he also wishes and desires the welfare of all, for therein love consists. Hence he wills and desires that all men should be saved, and none lost; for what greater misfortune could he wish to any one than to wish that he should not be saved, but (for this follows as a necessary consequence) be excluded from heaven and from the number of the elect and be sent to the everlasting fire of hell? Does not our Lord say of Judas, who wished to be damned through his own fault: "It were better for him if that man had not been born"?

He has given up his Son to a painful death for all; therefore he is willing to grant heaven to all. This one consideration is enough for me, and it should suffice for any thinking man to hold it as certain that God has an earnest, antecedent will to save all men, if they only wish it. I cannot believe anything else when I think that God has suffered death for all men that they may be freed from eternal death. And is it not infallibly certain as an article of faith? "He that spared not even his own Son, but delivered him up for us all" (Rom. 8 : 32). And what

has not this Son endured for our salvation? How could the Son of God give clearer proof of his most earnest will to save us? What more could he do to evince his great desire for our eternal welfare than to suffer and die as he did to secure it? Or what can the heavenly Father be not ready to give us, after having sacrificed for us in such a manner his dearest and only begotten Son? Shall he then refuse to give us heaven who has given us his only Son? That is, shall he refuse us a penny after having bestowed on us inexhaustible treasures and riches? This argument is not mine, but that of the great St. Paul, who says after the words already quoted: "How hath he not also, with him, given us all things?" (Rom. 8 : 32.)

Finally, if God has not an earnest will to save all men, but only the predestined, that is, those whom God has, without any regard to their merits, selected for heaven from the great multitude of men, whom he rejects; and if Christ died for the predestined alone, then the whole foundation of Christian hope falls away, and no one is left any heart to do good and to work for heaven. For why should I take that trouble when I know not whether my labor will help me to get to heaven or not? I should not like, and should not dare to trust my life to a sailor, unless I am sure that he means to bring me into port, and that he does not intend to leave me to drown in the middle of the river. Nor could I place any hope or confidence in God as far as regards my salvation if I did not know whether he really desires, as far as he is concerned, to bring me to heaven or to send me to hell, without any regard to my good works. But that I could not know if it were true that, as far as he is concerned, God has not the earnest wish to save all men, but has rather determined by an antecedent will to damn the greater number; for in that case I should have far more reason not to hope than to hope for salvation. No; that cannot be true, for it is opposed to the evident promises of the Sacred Scripture, to the Passion and death of Jesus Christ, to the goodness and mercy of our

heavenly Father, to the basis of the Christian's hope, to the general belief of the true Catholic Church, in which alone salvation can be found. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE HOPE OF THE JUST TO ATTAIN ETERNAL HAPPINESS, ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE FORMERLY COMMITTED GRIEVOUS SINS.

"*Charity covereth a multitude of sins.*"—1 Pet. 4 : 8.

Penitent sinners! what a consolation for you! Have you confessed your sins with due sorrow? Do you love your God with your whole heart for his own sake? Are you determined to serve him in future? Then rejoice in the Lord! You are again on the right way to heaven; you are again, as you were before, children and dear friends of God, and you have nothing to fear on the way of salvation on account of your past sins. Presumptuous sinners, who seem to think that all you need do is to confess your sins at Easter, and then sin away again as recklessly as before, I do not address you to-day! You do not belong to the number of true penitents! Half-hearted Christians! vain children of the world, who, after having committed and confessed many mortal sins, still continue to live according to the world and the lusts of the flesh, and neglect the divine law as of no consequence, I do not speak to you either; for you do not belong to the number of true penitents! My words are only for those anxious, timid souls, who dread even the danger of sin; who love God with their whole hearts, and do his will in all circumstances; who regret that they cannot love God enough, and are discouraged and frightened when they remember their

former sins, although they have often repented of them and amended their lives. To these I say:

You have no cause to give way to a cowardly fear on the way to heaven on account of your former sins, many and grievous though they be, if you have sincerely repented of them.

God does not act towards the sinner as he deserves, but shows love to him, even while he is in sin. Nay, he shows him, so to speak, a more tender love and goodness, precisely because he is a sinner, because he is one whom he has lost out of the number of his children. We have a figure of this in the meek David, who had to fly when driven from his throne by his rebellious son Absalom. The wickedness and ingratitude of Absalom could not have been greater; neither could the love and tenderness shown him by David, who was indeed forced, in order to save his life, to take up arms against his undutiful, wicked son; but how careful he was in commanding his generals and soldiers to spare his son's life, and not to do him any harm. What else does this rebellious son represent but the sinner who dares to rise up against his heavenly Father by disobedience? Truly, there is no wickedness in the conduct of Absalom that is not to be found in the rebellion of him who dares to despise the commandments of his God. But if the sinner is as presumptuous as Absalom, God is not less good and forgiving than the meek David. It seems to me that I hear the Lord crying out to those who attempt our lives: Save me my child; do not harm the poor man; leave him still alive, lest he should perish forever!

1. From this we must conclude: to have sinned, to have sinned grievously, to have sinned often, is no reason for doubting the goodness of God, but should rather be a motive to urge us all the more to a sure and certain hope, even if we are ac-

tually in sin, provided we have the earnest will to repent truly. For why otherwise should he so eagerly call on the sinner to return to him, so patiently and with such long-suffering await him, if he were not willing to admit him to mercy? Does he not go after him for years, touching and disturbing his conscience, reminding him of his evil plight, calling and crying out to him, beseeching and entreating him to return, as if he could not exist without him and his friendship? "Return to me and I will receive thee" (Is. 3 : 12, 1). You shall be as you were before.

Even his threats are a proof that he wishes to pardon the sinner. If I see an angry man standing over his prostrate foe with arms in his hands, oh! I should say at once, there is no chance for that wretch; he is bound to lose his life! But meanwhile I can hear nothing but angry words; the victor brandishes his sword and threatens and reviles his adversary; ah, I think, that man is not minded to slay his enemy; otherwise he would not have waited so long, for he might have spared his threats, since he has his foe at his mercy. Such, too, are my thoughts about the Almighty God. To complain of the sinner, to upbraid him with his shameful deeds, to threaten him with the fire of hell, to brandish the drawn sword over his head, although in all places and times he has him completely in his power: that is not punishing, or inflicting the fatal blow, or rejecti ıg and reprobating; it is rather giving time for repentance, inviting, and, as it were, compelling to return. In a word, all this is a sign of mercy and compassion; to me it seems like the conduct of a loving father, who sometimes appears to be in a terrible passion with his son who has offended him, and whom he seeks everywhere, although he knows the delinquent to be hidden in a corner; still he pretends not to see him, and goes about the room crying out: Where is the rascal? I will flog him till the blood comes! Meanwhile the son keeps as still as possible and trembles with fear, thinking how he may afterwards appease his

father's anger. So does God act. He threatens as if he were minded to destroy the sinner at once and condemn him to hell, but in reality he only wishes to inspire him with a salutary fear, and by that fear to drive him to ask for pardon. So he acted with our forefather immediately after the first sin: "Where art thou?" he cried out in angry tones throughout paradise. But, oh, great God! says St. Chrysostom; thou askest where he is? Dost thou not know that he is hidden amidst the trees? Truly, he knew it well, and yet he does not cease crying out: "Where art thou?" until at last Adam crept humbly forth from his hiding-place and acknowledged his guilt; and at once, instead of punishing him with eternal death, the Lord comforted him with the promise of a Redeemer.

2. From this I draw another conclusion: to have sinned, grievously and often, is not a reason to despair, but rather to hope all the more in the mercy of God for a sinner who returns and does penance; for will he who has such a tender love for the sinner, who calls him so earnestly, who awaits him so patiently, while he is still flying from God and in the act of rebellion and of sin—will God, I ask, reject, abandon, thrust from him the sinner who returns and asks for mercy, and promises to amend? Your sins, oh, man! are many in number, grievous in malice; for years and years you have wallowed in filth; be it so. But are your sins more hateful to God now that you detest them and bewail them, and fear the divine anger, than they were formerly, when you loved them more than you loved your God, and while you were despising his goodness? Formerly you transgressed his commandments with full deliberation, and with all the freedom of your wicked will; yet he continued to love you, to seek after you, to await you, to do good to you, even without your knowledge or gratitude; will he then cease to love you only when he beholds you humbly prostrate at his feet? Must his only thought now be to punish you, to reject you, to cast you off from him? How can that be possible? That

would indeed give us the idea of a stern, unjust God, who loves a man while he sins and rejects him when he repents.

Oh, no! you cannot as quickly resolve to do penance, even in desire, as God is ready and willing to receive you, nay, to meet you with his grace. He seems "in a greater hurry to grant pardon than the sinner to receive it." David was an adulterer, a murderer, a scandal to the whole kingdom; Achab was a persecutor of the Prophets, an unjust man, an idolater; Manasses was a monster of vice of all kinds: of impurity, cruelty, sorcery, who caused his own children to be burnt as an offering to the devil. It was with a humble sigh that Manasses while in prison implored the divine mercy; Achab put on a hair-shirt; David acknowledged his ingratitude with a contrite word: "I have sinned against the Lord." And behold, that was enough for the merciful God to induce him to receive the first, to defer the chastisement of the second, and to forgive the third all his sins. Read how Jesus Christ has acted; he who says of himself: "I am not come to call the just, but sinners" (Matt. 11 : 13). Publicans, notorious sinners, adulterers, unjust, usurers, and the like were those by whom he was always surrounded. "Now the publicans and sinners drew near unto him to hear him," so that the scribes and Pharisees, who could find nothing else to say against him, called him by what they thought the disgraceful name of patron and protector of sinners: "And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Read how he acted toward the notorious Magdalene, the usurer Zachæus, the woman taken in adultery, the thief on the cross; read only the parable of the prodigal son; see how he was received by his father.

Consider all this, and you will be obliged to acknowledge and confess with penitent David: "With the Lord there is mercy, and with him plentiful redemption." You will be compelled to acknowledge that if God is so good to him who is actually in sin, if he is so loving to the sinner who intends to repent,

if he receives so joyfully the sinner who returns to him, if he promises heaven and actually gives it to the sinner who repents even at the last moment: what will not that soul have to hope for from him, when it has long ago bewailed its past misdeeds, and has been trying for some time past to serve God with all possible zeal? Will the divine heart be less loving to such a soul because it has proved its fidelity for a longer time? Will the gate of heaven be closed more tightly, the gates of hell be more to be dreaded than in the case of the sinner? But who can believe that? For then a penitent and now just man, who is of good will, would be worse off than the sinner, who is still careless of his salvation, and has only the intention of repenting. Then we should have good reason for doubting the truth of what the God of truth has said: "If the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments. . . . living he shall live, and shall not die;" his former wicked life shall not harm him in the least: "The wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him" (Ezech. 33 : 12).

Why should penitent Christians, who now serve the Lord, give way to fear, anxiety, faintheartedness? Do those timid souls, who are always melancholy, sad in thought, and never dare to have a firm hope of heaven, on account of the many sins they have committed in the past, do they perhaps think that they thus please God, or perform a meritorious work, or practise humility? If so, they are greatly mistaken. It is one thing to be humble and have a lowly opinion of one's self before God, and another to be excessively troubled regarding one's salvation, and to mistrust the goodness of God. When the prodigal son returned repentant to his father, and sighed forth: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, I am not now worthy to be called thy son," his father, without the least word of reproof, fell on his neck, embraced him most heartily, led him into the house with joy and gladness, clothed him with new garments, prepared a great feast for him, invited

his friends to rejoice with him and make merry on account of his son that was lost and had returned again. Now, if while the family was thus rejoicing, the son sat there sad and melancholy, and refused to be comforted; or if he afterwards imagined that he had cause to be afraid, and anxious lest his father might still be angry with him, and therefore he did not dare to address him with due childlike confidence: do you think, I ask, that such conduct would be pleasing to that loving father? On the contrary, he would have just cause for being greatly displeased at it. What is the matter with you, my son? he would say. Who has done anything against you? Have I given you cause for fear or anxiety? I am quite satisfied with you; I and all my friends rejoice at your return, and yet you look as sad and troubled as if you did not trust me. Have I deserved that from you? If I did not mean well towards you I should not have received you with such kindness. And you refuse to trust in me and to show me a cheerful countenance. There, timid, cowardly soul, you see how you act towards the good God when you doubt of your salvation on account of your past sins.

Ah, they say, must I not be sorry when I think of my past life and remember how often I have offended the good God by mortal sin? Peter wept during his whole life whenever he heard the cock crow, and was thus reminded of his denial of his divine master. Magdalene and other holy penitents used to shed tears constantly. And shall I, who have so often and so grievously sinned, be of good heart and joyful? Listen to me; it is one thing to repent of one's sins, to weep at the recollection of them, and another to be downhearted on account of past transgressions, to lose confidence in God, and to despair of salvation. Truly, you must be sorry, and may shed as many tears as you please when you think of your former sins, but your sorrow and contrition should be childlike, and not take away your inward confidence and repose of conscience; your sorrow should

bring you a spiritual comfort and joy. For no one has more reason to rejoice than he who feels that he is heartily sorry for his sins, since that is a true sign that he is forgiven and is now a child of God. It is true that Peter, Magdalene and many other saints wept constantly; but do you think that their tears were sad and melancholy, that they proceeded from fear and doubts regarding their salvation? Their tears were sweeter and more agreeable than all the laughter of the world.

PENTECOST SUNDAY.

THE VANITY OF THE HOPE OF HEAVEN IN THOSE WHO DO NOT KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

"If any one love me, he will keep my word."—John 14:23.

This is the real proof, and the only way in which we can show our love of God, namely, by keeping the word of God, that is, his commandments. This is the only foundation of our hopes of heaven, the keeping the commandments. In vain should you hope for salvation, relying on the goodness and mercy of God, if you do not keep his commandments. In vain should you hope and desire salvation, relying on anything else, no matter what it is, if you do not keep the commandments, and indeed all of them. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19 : 17). And yet what a vast number of people there are in the world who delude themselves with that false hope!

I. Many men desire and hope to go to heaven, but they do not keep the commandments of God.

II. A still greater number desire and hope to go to heaven, but they do not keep all the commandments, or do not keep them constantly.

If nothing more were required to gain heaven but the mere wish and hope, then all men would be saved. Sinners, no matter how wicked and godless they are: blasphemers, profane swearers, adulterers, detractors, unjust, unchaste men, murderers, drunkards, from whom St. Paul has taken away all hope of heaven, might then be of good heart, for heaven would be theirs. For there is no one so blind and so wicked, if he has a little spark of faith and reason left, as not to feel pleasure at the thought of being saved eternally. There is no one so hardened in guilt as not to be terrified at the thought of the everlasting fire of hell; no one so forgetful of his own welfare as not to wish to go to heaven; no one so despairing as not to desire to escape hell. But the wish and desire alone will not do here.

Heaven is a great gain that we must work for with diligence: "Trade till I come" (Luke 19 : 13). Heaven is a crown that will not be given to any one who has not fought for it. Heaven is the promised land flowing with milk and honey, and to possess it we must go out of Egypt and wander through the desert; that is, we must detach our hearts from the world and the love of the world, deny ourselves and bear the cross laid on us. Heaven is a kingdom in which an infinite God makes the happiness of his elect, but it must be stormed and taken by violence: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. 11 : 12). Again: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19 : 17).

Now, there are many who hope and wish for heaven, but they do not work for it. I trust I shall get to heaven. I will and must save my soul. God forbid that I should be lost forever. The salvation of my soul is the chief thing, on which

everything depends. God grant that I may die a happy death! Such are the thoughts, the professions, the desires, the words of most, nay, nearly all Christians. Therefore I will strive earnestly for heaven; I will direct all my cares and occupations to that one end; I will keep all the commandments of God, avoid all sin and the dangers of sin, and diligently perform the duties of my state, and serve God zealously.

"Good master," said the young man to our Lord, "what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" I know well and see that the world is not for me, and that I am not for the world; for sooner or later I must leave it and go hence; what does it cost to win heaven? Our Lord gave a plain answer to this question: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19 : 16, 17). The first and most necessary condition is: "if thou wilt." Do you really wish it? Are you fully determined about it? He does not say: if thou wouldst wish; but if thou wilt. Oh, what a heap of false desires, wishes and intentions of going to heaven we have in our hearts; for we do not say: I will; I am fully determined, earnestly resolved; but I would wish; I should like. Our desires for heaven are nothing else but half acts of the will, slight and weak movements of the heart, fruitless and empty desires, sickly and vacillating resolutions, vain, natural longings which we have for all that is represented to us as good, pleasing, becoming and useful. Such lame and weak desires are common even with the greatest and most hardened sinners; for they well know what sin is: how detestable, dangerous and injurious it is, and they would wish to be freed from it; they are also aware of the beauty of virtue, and would willingly practise it; but even while they wish to turn from evil and lead good lives they go on in the old way and make no change. "The sluggard willeth and willeth not" (Prov. 13 : 4).

And yet all people hope and desire to go to heaven. Ask them if they would not be glad to save their souls, if they have

any intention and hope of doing that; there is no doubt, they will answer: We must go to heaven; we must save our souls. But you may wish and desire a long time before you save them in that way. No, that will never do; your wish is a mere empty desire that exists only in the imagination; it is not a firm, earnest determination of the will. Hell is full of souls that have wished to be eternally happy; not one of them wanted to be damned, but they did not wish earnestly; they were disposed in the matter just as you are. He who desires to attain the end must use the means necessary thereto. "If any one love me he will keep my word." He who desires to gain heaven must keep the commandments of God, otherwise his hope is a false and deceitful one. And he must keep all the commandments, and that constantly, otherwise his hope is again deceitful and false; and yet it is entertained by most men.

Preach to some about mortification, fasting, abstinence from forbidden food, moderation in drinking—oh, in those things they find no difficulty; they think and say with the young man in the Gospel, whom Christ exhorted to keep the commandments: "All these things I have observed from my youth." Thank God! I am no drunkard or reveller; I keep the fast days prescribed by the Church as a Catholic Christian should keep them. And so they go home from the sermon comforted, with a sure pledge of their eternal salvation. But preach to them about abstaining from forbidden carnal pleasures, about guarding the eyes and other senses so as not to wound purity by look or thought, and what happens? Even what happened with that young man when our Lord said to him: "Go, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me." At these words he went away sad, without making answer: "Who, being struck sad at that saying, went away sorrowful." That did not suit him. If I say to a man: he who wishes to go to heaven must lead a chaste life, he is pleased with that, because he is not inclined to

the vice of impurity, or lives happy in the married state; "all these things I have observed," he will answer. But if I add: he who wishes to go to heaven must make restitution of ill-gotten goods and give them back to their lawful owner, even to the last farthing, then he goes away; that does not suit him. The third thinks: so far I am all right; I do not remember having injured any one in my whole life; "all these things I have observed;" but if I say to him: he who wishes to go to heaven must lay aside hatred and ill-will, and live in peace with his neighbor, and forgive his enemy from his heart, that does not please him at all; he goes away sad. A fourth thinks: that is not for me; I have not an enemy on the face of the earth, and I wish well to every one as I do to myself; "all these things I have observed." But if I say: you must also give up that intimacy, that company and occasion which is the radical cause of so many sins to you; you must renounce that vanity and love of dress that is a cause of scandal to others, and leads them into sin, then he goes away sad. A fifth thinks: this is not for me; "all these things I have observed." But if I say: you must from day to day earnestly try to lessen and altogether give up your habit of cursing and swearing, then he shrugs his shoulders, and goes away sad. The sixth thinks: "all these things I have observed;" I do not curse or swear. But you must keep your unruly tongue in check, and give up that habit of fault-finding, abusing and talking uncharitably of others and injuring their reputation, thus sinning against charity; that is not at all to his taste; he goes away sad.

But this is not enough; all the commandments, without one exception, must be kept. It is with the Christian life as with faith. If I refuse to believe a single article of faith I am an unbeliever; if I fail to observe one point of the law I am wicked and deserve hell-fire. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all" (James 2 : 10). When you are on a journey does it help you to have three good

and sound wheels on your carriage if the fourth is broken so that you cannot proceed? What does it avail your health to be free from fever if consumption chains you to your bed? What difference does it make to your life to be pierced with a sword or shot with a bullet? In the same way, how could it help your salvation to go with one foot towards heaven and with the other towards hell? You say: I am not a thief or an unjust man; that is all right; but you are puffed up and proud on account of your wealth, and you despise others, so that it is your pride that will send you to hell. You are not guilty of adultery or incest; that is right; but you are impure in your thoughts and desires; you are a cause of sin to others by your extravagance in dress, by your caresses and allurements; it is this latter vice that will condemn you. You are not one of those who seek quarrels and foment discord and disunion; but you are apt to rash-judge and speak ill of your neighbor. It is not a revengeful spirit, but rash-judging and an unbridled tongue that will be the cause of your ruin. You are not a public, notorious, scandalous and abandoned sinner; but you are addicted to a secret sin known to yourself alone, and that will be reason enough for God to reject you. No matter what good works you perform, as long as you do not renounce all vices, you are only half a Christian; you are divided between God and the devil; you have only half a wish to go to heaven. God does not allow that; he must have all or nothing. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind" (Matt. 32 : 37). "He that is not with me is against me" (Matt. 12 : 30).

Every sin is an abomination in the sight of God, yet it would be better for many a one and more advantageous to his salvation, to be altogether and evidently vicious than to be only half devout. Why? Because a great and wicked sinner has a clearer perception of his unhappy and miserable state, and is more likely to free himself from it by sincere repentance and

amendment through the fear of hell, while the half-Christian, since he is not conscious of grievous or very enormous sins, and actually does some apparently good works every day, flatters himself that his devotion is all right and lives assured of salvation without fear or anxiety, nor does he find out his mistake until he has actually entered on an unhappy eternity. It was the public sinner who stood humbly at the door of the temple, and, striking his breast, with contrite heart acknowledged his guilt: "Oh, God! be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18 : 13). On the other hand, the Pharisee boasted of his fasting, alms-giving and other works, and thought he was a saint; but, according to the testimony of our Lord, it was not he, but the publican who went home justified. And this is the meaning of the divine words of the Apocalypse: "I would thou wert cold, or hot; but because thou art lukewarm," half fish, half flesh, belonging half to me and half to the devil, "....I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth."

Do you wish to go to heaven? If so why do you take such little trouble about it? Do you not wish to go to heaven? What have you to seek or desire in this world? What do you hope, or fear, or love? Why do you live if all your hopes, fears, desires, longings, lives, labors, and love are not directed to that one necessary business for the sake of which alone you are on this earth, and that is the business of your eternal salvation? If you do not gain heaven, what good will all other things be to you? And must you then hear that terrible reproof from the lips of the divine Judge: "How often would I have gathered together....and thou wouldst not?" How often have I desired to make you happy forever, and you would not accept my offer? Well, before it comes to that change your will. Now let us say once for all: Oh, my God! I will go to heaven; this is my earnest determination and I will work for its fulfilment constantly by carefully avoiding all sin and the occasions of sin, and by diligently performing all my duties through a true,

zealous love for thee. And what is wanting to my weak will do thou supply by thy powerful grace, oh, Holy Ghost! who on this day didst so wonderfully change the Apostles; that thus strengthened by thy almighty power, I may hope with childlike confidence one day to enter heaven, where I shall see, love and praise thee with the heavenly Father, and his blessed Son, my Saviour, Jesus Christ, for all eternity. Amen.

First Sunday After Pentecost.

THE HOPE OF HEAVEN THAT IS FOUNDED ON CERTAIN PIOUS PRACTICES IS VERY DECEITFUL.

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."—Matt. 28: 20.

"All power is given to me in heaven and in earth," says our Lord to his disciples; as if he wished to say, I am able to bring all men to heaven. My will and desire is that all should be saved; but this will is not enough to insure the salvation of all; he who wishes to go to heaven must contribute his share to that effect. "Going therefore teach ye all nations." He who wishes to go to heaven must belong to the true faith; but faith alone in me is not enough to secure salvation. He who desires to be saved must be baptized: "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." But even this will not suffice: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." He who desires heaven must keep my commandments, and indeed all of them. Now, there are many who found their hopes of heaven partly on different pious practices that they are wont to perform, partly on some

attempts at self-justification with which they try to excuse their sins.

But to neglect the observance of even one of the commandments, and to build one's hopes of salvation on any works of piety or attempts at self-justification is a false and deceitful hope.

There is no devotion to which we can trust our salvation if we do not keep all the commandments. Fervent prayer, hearing Mass, almsdeeds and charity to the poor, fasting, devotion to God and the Mother of God. What powerful means to gain and to preserve the grace and friendship of God! And if they are made use of in the state of grace, with a good intention, they add much to our sanctifying grace and merit here, and to eternal glory hereafter in heaven! Ah, is it possible for a Christian who diligently performs those works to be excluded from heaven and condemned to hell forever? There is no doubt of it; if he who does those good works does not repent of his sins, if he does not lead a pious life and keep all the commandments, he will certainly go to hell, and unfortunately there are many Catholics who build their hopes of salvation on a foundation of the kind, and are certain of saving their souls, although at the time they are living in sin, and neglect certain duties of their state and condition.

1. Hence false is the hope that many found on certain prayers. Some are so simple-minded and credulous as to believe firmly that all who say those prayers constantly as they are prescribed, and never omit them, will not die unrepentant, but by the merit of those prayers will receive the grace of final perseverance. That is a deceit of the devil, who thus makes fools of many. For they place all their hopes of salvation in those prayers, and take little care to amend their lives, nay, sin all the more recklessly sometimes. To spend hours in the church praying, and then to swear, curse and grumble the whole day

long at home; to bring up children to vanity and idleness, to give them a bad example and yet to hope to get to heaven; truly, that is a deceitful hope! Hear what our Lord says: "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven (and keeps all his commandments), he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 7 : 21). And you think you can get hold of it so easily by saying a few prayers?

Then, indeed, the poor hermits were laboring in vain when practising austerities in the wilderness! And the holy martyrs were fools to endure the torments inflicted on them by the tyrants to whom they freely gave themselves up. To no purpose has Christ given us the exhortation: "Strive to enter by the narrow gate" (Luke 13 : 24); do violence to yourselves by penance that you may enter heaven. All this would be to no purpose if it were possible to save our souls by saying a few prayers. No; it is not so easy to walk into heaven. A pure conscience, a pious, upright life, the way of the cross and penance, that is the only road to heaven, and no one can get there otherwise, although he were to say thousands of prayers. Prayer is necessary to gain heaven, and it must not be omitted. It is necessary for the just man to keep him free from sin: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." It is necessary for the sinner to obtain from God the grace of repentance and sincere conversion. Pray, then, fervently and diligently, but pray first of all for a contrite and penitent heart for all your sins; pray, but at the same time amend your life. Keep all the commandments of God; fulfil the duties of your state of life. If you fail in this, then you honor God only with the lips, while by actions you drive him out of your heart, and all your praying will not help you to heaven.

2. Others put their trust in certain pious practices which they do at stated times; they give candles for the altar; they always wear blessed things, crosses, and indulgenced pennies;

they get others to go to holy Communion for them and to pray for them; they fast every Friday or Saturday in the year, and on Good Friday eat nothing till evening; and when they have done those things they imagine they cannot be lost, but must save their souls and go to heaven. They give generous alms to the poor, and think that thus they pay off the debt contracted by their sins, although they do not repent or confess, or take any steps to amend their lives. They find great consolation in their wicked lives in the words of the elder Tobias to his son: "Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness;" but they do not attach the right meaning to those words, and they forget what Tobias said in his exhortation: "All the days of thy life have God in thy mind; and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord, our God" (Tob. 4 : 11, 6).

Fasting and almsgiving are very meritorious, but they do not help to heaven him who does not keep the commandments. The Pharisee prayed in the temple; he fasted twice in the week; he gave the tenth part of all his goods to the poor; moreover, he took God to witness that he did not live in grievous sin like other men; and yet on account of pride alone all his good works did not help to his justification. Generosity to the poor has, indeed, a special power of freeing from sin and eternal death; but not without true repentance and amendment of life. For, "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor,....and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." How do almsdeeds free from sin? Almsdeeds are able to move the Almighty to touch the heart of the sinner, and to give him plentiful graces that he may repent and amend, and so be freed from the state of sin and from eternal death. But if a man is determined to persist in his evil ways and unlawful habits, then I would say to him at once: Unhappy, foolish man, you are deceiving yourself with all your pious works; you are going to hell! All you do

is not of the least use to gain heaven for you; with all your good works you go to hell.

3. Others, too, are deceived who put their trust in various sodalities and confraternities, in which they are enrolled. True, it was a holy thought inspired by God that led to the foundation of those sodalities and confraternities; but as there is nothing so holy that the devil does not try to work something out of it to further his own ends, that spirit of evil tries to do mischief by those very sodalities, and though they were intended to further the welfare of souls, he, by his craft, turns them into a means of destruction, by persuading silly people that if they are enrolled in those sodalities and keep their rules they cannot be damned. And many trust to this, place no restraint on their evil passions, and indulge freely in sin. This is a most detestable error and a deceit of the evil one.

I am a sodalist, you say, a member of this or that confraternity; therefore, on account of the spiritual tie which unites us, I receive my share of the good works done by my fellow-sodalists. Truly, you do! And for your comfort I will tell you something more: You are a Catholic, and consequently a member of the true Church of Christ; therefore you are in the Communion of Saints; that is, you receive a share of all the prayers and good works of every Catholic in the world. But if you are in the state of sin, you are a dead and rotten member of the confraternity, of the Church, and therefore you can derive as little fruit from the good works done therein as an amputated or mortified finger can receive from the food and drink which the rest of the healthy body consumes. The most you can expect is that the other members who are in the state of grace may by their prayers and good works obtain for you from God the grace of true conversion. Be enrolled, then, in a sodality; that is a good thing for all; but be careful that you are enrolled also among the beloved children of God. Sodalities

and confraternities are established with the view of making their members more holy and pious, and that by mutual good example they may spur one another on to virtue and the fear of the Lord, so that after a holy life they may die a happy death, and love forever in heaven the God whom they loved together on earth. But you may take it for granted that you will burn all the deeper in hell because you led a wicked life in such holy company.

4. Others, again, place their hopes in their so-called love for and devotion to the Mother of God, and they live on carelessly in sin. No one who is devout to the Blessed Virgin can be lost; that is their favorite saying. A vain, deceitful hope! All the Fathers of the Church are unanimous on the point, countless great sinners have experienced it and still experience it every day; I must and will always maintain before the world, with grateful heart, that I know by my own experience, in myself and others, that next to God the Blessed Virgin Mary is the only hope of sinners, the Mother of grace, the Mother of mercy, the Refuge of sinners; whose prayers often move God to withhold the scourge and receive man again to his grace. I acknowledge, too, that none of her children shall be lost forever; but will she reckon in their number, and protect by her intercession, and bring to eternal salvation those whose love and devotion to her consists only in a few prayers that they say every day as a cloak for their wickedness, who honor her only with the lips that they may all the more freely offend her and her divine Son? Presumptuous sinners, your hope, I repeat, is a vain and deceitful one. Yours is not the love and devotion that characterizes the true child of Mary.

5. Others, more foolish, excuse and defend their bad habits by appealing to the conduct of men of the world at the present day. Others do so, they say; why should it not be lawful for me as well? The greater number do so; they have consciences,

too; amongst them are many good and pious souls who wish to go to heaven, so that the thing cannot be so very bad after all. At all events, I did not begin it, and therefore I am free from sin. What foolish reasoning! Those people are like the thieves who asked the judge to do away with the gallows. The judge said to them: Do you give up stealing, and then I will do away with the gallows. But the thieves replied: We did not introduce thieving, and we will not abolish it. Nor, said the judge, did I introduce the gallows, nor will I abolish it. If that style of argument were admissible, then you might go and do what you please; wallow in impurity whenever you have the opportunity; it is lawful, for, alas! many others make a habit of that vice. Drink until you are bereft of your senses; there is nothing to prevent you; for drunkenness has now become so fashionable that men are no longer ashamed of it. Curse and swear as well as you know how; you are quite at liberty to do so, for there are few houses nowadays in which that hellish speech is not indulged in by young and old frequently in the day. In all these things you can appeal to the argument: many others do it, therefore it is lawful for me, too. But I say: No custom or prescription can hold against the law of God, the fundamental truths of the Gospel of Christ. If I do anything that does not harmonize with that Gospel, although others, and even the majority of men, do the same, I sin with them; and if I persist in sin I shall be damned with them.

Imitate in your life the few, that you may merit to be elected with the few and to find a place in heaven. Do penance; repent of and confess your sins and amend your life; live according to the rules laid down for us by our Lord in his holy Church. Live as he lived; as his faithful servants live; keep the commandments of God, keep them all without exception, keep them constantly; in all things, at all times, in all circumstances do what you know to be the will of God. To build one's hopes of

salvation on anything else, no matter how holy it is,—prayers, confraternities, works of devotion—is a vain, false, deceitful hope, that can have only one ending, that of the reprobate in hell.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE TIMELY RECEPTION OF THE VIATICUM.

"*Compel them to come in.*"—Luke 14: 23.

A certain lord had prepared a grand supper for the refreshment of his friends, and yet some of the guests he had invited did not come. It is always so. They sent excuses. The goodness and love of our Saviour is represented to us in the person of the lord in the Gospel. What an infinitely precious food he has prepared for us in giving us his own flesh and blood as our meat and drink! He invites all to partake of it: "Come, eat my bread and drink the wine which I have mingled for you" (Prov. 9 : 5). "Come to me, all you, and I will refresh you" (Matt. 11 : 28); eat and drink for nothing! And yet how astonishing the stupidity of us mortals! He has the utmost difficulty in inducing us to come to this supper, which is so advantageous, nay, so necessary for us! And in fact there are Christians who must be compelled almost by force and violence to approach the holy Table, so seldom are they seen at it, so that the Catholic Church has been obliged to make a law rendering the reception of holy Communion at least once a year necessary under pain of excommunication. But why is it that if we are ever careless and dilatory in receiving holy Communion it is at the time when we are most in need of it and when our Lord is most anxious to come to us—I mean the time of

sickness. To-day I will speak of these two points:

I. The loving condescension of our dear Redeemer; and
II. Our own stupid negligence.

I. If there is anything that can bring consolation in sickness it is a visit from a good, sincere friend, who can comfort the sick man and help him to pass the time by agreeable or consoling conversation. By agreeable conversation, I say; for it is not every visit that is pleasing to the sick man; there are some visits that only annoy him and make him wish that the person who came to trouble him with silly talk would go away. Job, patient as he was, sitting on the dung-hill and writhing in pain, complained of the friends who visited him with the intention of offering him consolation; for they began to speak to him of a host of things of which they knew nothing, and tried to fathom the designs of God in punishing him so severely. Ah, said he at last after having listened to them for a long time in silence: "You are all troublesome comforters. Shall windy words have no end?" (Job 16 : 23.) Will you not put a stop to that vain, silly talk? If I were not sick it would be enough to make me so. But, on the other hand, a loving, sympathetic, cheerful, modest friend, who "showeth mercy with cheerfulness" (Rom. 12 : 8), encourages one by his conversation and makes his visit welcome. Such a friend as that cheers up the sick man and often helps him to forget his pains. And it is in time of sickness and trouble that true friendship is proved and the steadfastness of an affection that is not changed by outward circumstances.

Nowhere can the suffering Christian find a more faithful or loving friend than Jesus Christ; and from whom can he expect greater consolation, refreshment, and help, than when his Saviour comes to visit him in person in the Blessed Sacrament as the food and drink of his soul? When brothers, sisters, parents, friends visit you in your sickness, what can they do for

you besides giving you the miserable consolation of the outward expression of their sympathy, making known their good wishes in your regard, and expressing their hopes that you may soon get better? When they have done that they can go home, and what better are you? That is all you have gained by their visit; they cannot take from you the bodily pains or mental depression which the natural sensitiveness to illness causes you. Nor can they give you the strength of grace to support the torments of your sickness and thus make them easier for you; nor can they lengthen your natural bodily life or assure you of eternal life; and therefore you can say to them, like Job: "You are troublesome comforters," from whom no help is to be expected.

But when Jesus visits you in the Blessed Sacrament your faith tells you that he is the Son of God, who holds in his hands the keys of life and death, to whom, while he was still on earth, the sick and dying were brought, and as St. Luke says: "Virtue went out from him and healed all" (Luke 6 : 19). He is the same the touch of whose garments was enough to cure disease; whose visit to a house filled it with joy and gladness. It is Jesus Christ who visits you, and he can at once relieve you from pain and sickness, or alleviate your sufferings, or lengthen your life, or give you patience, or assure you of eternal life; or else, if he does not help you in that way, he can let you understand what his reason is, that he wills you to suffer longer for the good of your soul; therefore he consoles you in the best way of all, giving you the grace of resignation to his holy will.

Jesus Christ, in the Blessed Sacrament, is the best and surest protector. Who would be afraid when he is present? For if the mere name of Jesus is enough to make the devils tremble and to put them to flight, what will he not do when he is united to the soul in his own adorable Person? If the mere recollection of Jesus is a source of joy to the heart, what an immense consolation and heavenly sweetness will not be caused to the

heart of the just man in his sickness by the real presence of our Lord? Oh, yes, sweeter than honey and all things is his sweet presence.

What thanks and love we owe our dearest Saviour for such condescension and for the favor he shows us when we are most in need of his visit and consolation! And, oh, folly and stupidity of us mortals! often we have no desire for this most loving, and, to us, most necessary, visit! So it is. There are men, Christians, Catholics, who, if they ever object to be visited by our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, do so especially during the time of sickness, so that they have then to be almost forced to receive holy Communion by extreme necessity. They must be begged and prayed before they will admit our Lord.

II. In a certain play there was once represented a grand palace, before the door of which all kinds of men were standing waiting for an opportunity to enter and hand in their petitions; but no one was admitted unless he was a friend of the attendant who had to present such petitions, or knew how to flatter him, or was dressed in costly style, or had bribed the porter. Among the crowd there was an honest, upright man, who had been waiting several days for admission, but in vain. "Oh, blind and unjust gates," he cried out at last, who so little know whom you should admit first of all! Unjust gates, by which virtue is shut out! I might say the same, my dear brethren, to many a door behind which some one lies dangerously sick. "Oh, unjust door, that so little knowest whom thou shouldst admit!" The doctors come, and the door is thrown wide open; they are sent for in all haste when the sickness first declares itself; and quite right, too. Friends and acquaintances come to see how the sick man is; the door is thrown wide open; nor can we find fault with that. But where is the most skilful Doctor of all? Where is the best, truest and most necessary Friend, Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament? He, too, stands before the

door, ready to enter at any moment. He earnestly desires to be admitted to pay a visit to the sick man; but no one thinks of him, or at best he is remembered when the patient is at the last gasp; meanwhile the door remains closed.

This most reprehensible custom comes, in many cases, from a false idea that people have (and I know not whence they have it) that once they receive the holy Viaticum they must die. What incomprehensible ignorance amongst Catholics! If I receive holy Communion I must die! If I receive the Author of life I must die! If I allow Jesus Christ to visit me I must die! Mercy on us! To what ignorance do we owe an argument of that kind? To make out of a sacrament of the living, that restores health not only to the soul, but often, also, to the body—to make out of that a sign of approaching death, as if he who has the keys of life in his hands could only be a harbinger of death! And you, husbands and wives, parents, friends, and domestics, how cruelly you often act towards the members of your households, in preventing them from receiving holy Viaticum during their illness or in putting off the reception of it from day to day, asking the doctors, nurses, and friends not to hint a word of danger, and least of all of the holy Viaticum, lest the sick person should be frightened! Thus the patient is defrauded of the heavenly food, until he grows delirious or falls into a lethargy which deprives him of the use of reason, or begins to gasp for breath, or has the death-sweat already on his brow, so that his soul is on the point of departing: thus it is either too late to receive holy Communion and the other sacraments, or else the patient cannot prepare for them worthily, and so receives them without any profit. This divine Sacrament, worthily received, is a certain pledge of eternal life. Now, if one neglects to receive it through culpable negligence, or defers receiving it until he can no longer prepare for it properly, especially when he is about to undertake the dangerous journey into eternity, what a bad sign that is for him! Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE FALSE HOPE OF THE SINNER WHO TRUSTS IN THE MERCY OF GOD.

"*This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.*"—Luke 15 : 2.

Sinners when exhorted to do penance generally say: God is merciful; his mercies are above all his works. Christ is the friend of sinners; he receives them, he eats with them, he rejoices with his Angels when a sinner is saved. What have we to fear? We trust in the mercy of God, and we shall be saved. Of such people the Holy Ghost says: "There are wicked men who are as secure as though they had the deeds of the just" (Eccles. 8 : 14). But to live in sin and trust for salvation to the goodness of God is not a firm hope, but rather a rash presumption; it is not a sign of election to heaven, but rather of eternal reprobation, as I shall now prove, to inspire the wicked with a salutary fear that they may amend in time, if they wish to have the consolation of a firm hope of salvation.

I. The presumption of sinners in hoping for heaven because God is merciful is a sure sign of eternal reprobation, because it is a most outrageous act of contempt towards God.

II. This presumptuous hope is a sure sign of reprobation, because God is, as it were, forced to damn those who act thus presumptuously.

I. Suppose you have an enemy who has grievously offended you, and on whom you would like to be revenged if you had the chance; but he is too strong for you. See, there he goes

across the market-place; run after him at once, fall upon him, and let him feel the effects of your anger! No, no, you say, I must not think of that. Why? Because he is much stronger than I; he is not likely to let me off easily; I know him well, and am sure that if it came to blows I should be the worst off. In that case you act prudently to let him alone. But have you no hesitation in attacking and offending your God, who has never done anything to injure you, but has always been your benefactor? Why is that? Is he perhaps weaker than you, so that you can rely on your strength in provoking him? Can you go anywhere to escape him, so that you may take refuge in flight? Can he not hurl you into hell amongst the devils, in the very place, at the very moment in which you insult him? If you knew that such would be the consequence of the first sin you commit, would you commit it? No, you say, I would not be so foolish, no matter how strong my inclination, how violent my passion. And what makes you now so daring that you do not fear to heap sin on sin? Is it not because you believe, hope and trust that God will not punish you, that he will not send you to hell, but will forgive you your sins as he has already done for so many? You are like the wicked man of whom St. Augustine speaks: "Behold," you say, "I did it yesterday, and God spared me; I do it to-day, and God spares me; I shall do it to-morrow because God spares." But what sort of a foundation is that for you to build your belief, hope on, that he will spare you in the future? Because, you answer in thought, God is a good, patient, merciful Father, who is easily appeased and easily persuaded to admit the sinner to his friendship; and I hope that he will not abandon me in future, because his mercy is infinitely greater than all the sins of the world are grievous. Therefore you sin because God is good and merciful? Therefore, because God is good you are bad.

Truly, to sin because we know that God is good and merciful, and that he will act kindly towards us, is an insult to God, a

malice than which none greater can be found among men or demons. If a man sins sometimes through weakness or surprise, or through being in the occasion of sin or through violence of passion that he cannot resist without the utmost difficulty, and fears and trembles in his uneasy conscience the moment the sin is committed, he has, indeed, done wrong, but he seems to be in some degree to be borne with, because he has given signs of an honorable disposition; he knows that he has offended God, and that knowledge fills him with fear and terror. If a man sins through despair of the mercy of God, like Cain and Judas, and says to himself: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon" (Gen. 4 : 13), that is indeed one of the most grievous sins, and yet it is not so bad and terrible as presumption. Why? Because the despairing man has still some respect and awe for the infinite holiness and strict justice of God; and he acknowledges his own wickedness, which he imagines to be so great that he cannot be pardoned. The devils in hell and all the reprobate curse and blaspheme God—a terrible sin! Yet I can easily understand it. Why? Because they experience nothing from God but the rigors of his justice; they have nothing to expect from him for all eternity but to feel the weight of his chastising hand; they have no share in the goodness and mercy of God, and no hope of any alleviation of their torments. But you, presumptuous man, do what no other sinner in the world, what none of the reprobate in hell, and not even the devils do: you sin and insult God precisely because he is so good to you; precisely because you console yourself with the hope of his mercy, and because you flatter yourself that you will be happy with him for all eternity.

Now, if you have any common sense left, you can see for yourself whether your manner of acting towards God, whether the presumption with which you treat him is likely to move him to show you his mercy and to give you at the hour of death a special, extraordinary grace that he is bound to give to no one,

and thus to place you among the small number of the elect, and to make you eternally happy. How could you expect such a favor? If you have offended the justice of God, you have still a refuge left in his mercy; but if you attack that and insult it, where will you fly for help? Wicked as you are, I believe that God would rather give you the grace to prophesy future events, to heal all sorts of diseases, and to raise the dead; for even Judas worked miracles, and was damned at last in spite of them. But the grace of perseverance, of a happy death, of eternal salvation is not for the sinner who presumptuously trusts in the mercy of God in the midst of his wickedness; to expect it under such circumstances would be to expect that God will not punish our sins, and that, too, on the day on which he will let sinners feel the weight of his indignation and strict justice. Ah, be not too sure; do not sin because God is good!

II. God will, as it were, be forced to condemn the presumptuous sinner. Why? His honor requires it. If a man of respectability is insulted and ill-treated without cause, if he is of a meek and gentle disposition he will say nothing about the offence for the first or second time, although he may be able to defend himself. But if he sees that his meekness and patience only encourage the other to insult him more boldly, then he says to himself: I cannot stand that; I must show him that I can take my own part; that I am not a child, or a fool, whom any one can vex as he pleases, and from whom one has nothing to fear. Otherwise people will look on me as an idiot whom they can treat as they wish. And what else have the vindictive on their lips and in their hearts but their honor? They try to excuse the sins they commit by saying: My honor was concerned in the matter. What do we take our God to be? What sort of an opinion have we of his patience and mercy? Have we to do with a dumb, senseless image? With a wooden Jupiter, who holds a wooden thunder-bolt in his hand; whom one

wicked or tepid or more slothful life, an occasion of persisting in the state of sin, and deferring repentance from day to day, meanwhile adding to the catalogue of your crimes, you, I say, turn your thoughts in time to the other side, and consider the strict justice of God, which will not allow itself to be played with. Think: it is God who will render to every one according to his works; who keeps in his anger till the day of wrath, when he will say to most men: "Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire;" therefore, return to the merciful God!

And all of you, whoever you may be, that you may not err by excess or defect, select the golden mean; hope and fear at the same time; fear sin; hope in the goodness of God. The fear of God's justice should make you careful to avoid the occasions of sin, lest you should fall; the hope in God's mercy should give you courage and comfort, that you may rise again immediately if you are so unfortunate as to fall. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE VAIN HOPE OF A DEATH-BED REPENTANCE.

"*We have labored all the night, and have taken nothing.*" —Luke 5 : 5.

By the night we understand the state of sin, in which he lives who either does not repent of his sins or who does not earnestly propose to amend his life. While in that state all his works, although they may be good and holy in themselves, cannot gain for him the slightest merit for heaven. If any of you labor in that dismal night, return by true repentance to the clear light! Wait no longer, for it is a deceitful and treacherous hope that builds on the future. But, you may say, when I see that I am

dangerously ill I can repent of and confess my sins, and by receiving the last Sacraments gain heaven at the end of my life. Alas! this hope of heaven rests on conversion in the last illness. Now, this is a false, deceitful, and almost desperate hope, for:

In vain do you hope to be converted and save your soul in your last illness.

I. God himself denies you that hope.

II. Experience also denies it to you.

I. All prudent hope must have a reasonable foundation to enable us to trust that we shall obtain what we desire; and that foundation rests chiefly on the promise of the person from whom the favor is to come. That you, oh, sinner! who spend your whole life in wickedness, may have the hope of being converted at and before the end of your life, the Almighty God, from whom you have to receive this grace, must either have given you some promise to that effect, or else he must at least have given you some sign by which you can know that your hope is justified. Now, not only has God given you no sign of his will to this effect, but he has rather signified that his design and intention are quite contrary to what you suppose. Consider those terrible words: "Turn ye at my reproof," says the Lord; be converted, and at once! Delay no longer! Otherwise, "Behold, I will utter my spirit to you, and will show you my words. Because I called, and you refused. I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded" (Prov. 1 : 23, 24). I have often spoken to you by the voice of my servants, who warned you against evil; I have called to you by the example of so many good Christians, which should have encouraged you to do good; I have urged you by the inward voice of your own conscience, which was troubled by remorse on account of your wickedness; "and you refused." You have been exhorted in sermons to restore ill-gotten goods, but you have kept them; to renounce that impure intimacy and dangerous

occasion, but you remained in it; to pardon your enemy from your heart, but you have refused to do so; to amend your sinful life, to make a good confession, to avoid sin, and to begin to lead a Christian life; but you refused. "You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions." And what will be the result? "I also will laugh at your destruction and will mock." "They shall call upon me, and I will not hear: they shall rise in the morning, and shall not find me." Overwhelmed by the anguish of death, they will cry out to me: Oh, my God! have mercy on me! but he will not hear them. "They have hated instruction, and received not the fear of the Lord, nor consented to my counsel" (Prov. 1 : 25, 30).

Therefore the sinner's hope of a death-bed repentance is a vain one. If it is probable that God will give you the grace of true repentance in your last illness, and that one who has deferred repentance to the hour of death has reasonable ground for hoping that his death will be a happy one, why has God said quite the contrary? Why has he never uttered the least syllable hinting that he is ready to give you such a grace? Why does he rather threaten in the opposite sense? "I will laugh; I will mock; I will not hear; you shall die in your sin," although you call upon me; you shall not find me, although you seek me. Are you not yet afraid? Do you still believe there is no danger? no need to live piously if you wish to die happily? Have you still hopes of a happy death, when he who alone can give you that grace assures you expressly that you shall die in your sins? You are not sure that you shall have time enough to repent on your death-bed; you are not sure that you shall have the grace of God in your power, the grace which you require to do true penance. You are not sure that your will shall then be ready to hate and detest what it now so foolishly loves; and you are certain that the divine will shall be quite contrary to yours; yet you hope, and confiding in your hope, you continue in sin!

Abraham, who, although commanded by God to slay his

only son, still hoped to become the father of a numerous people by that same son! "Who against hope believed in hope, that he might be made the father of many nations" (Rom. 4 : 18). But great as was the confidence of that holy man, sinners have a still greater; for they hope not only against hope, but in God against God. Abraham believed that God would work a miracle rather than break his promise; they believe that God will rather break his word than not perform a miracle for them in giving them a most extraordinary, wonderful grace of repentance at the last moment. But hope as you wish! If you are not disappointed, all the better for you! At all events, God denies you this hope, "because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation" (Luke 19 : 44), because you have allowed the time of grace to pass by unaccountably to God, and unprofitably to yourselves. Experience itself denies you this hope.

II. If God had either promised the last grace to the dying sinner after an ill-spent life, or was wont to give that grace, then after such a long lapse of time, during which there have been so many dying sinners, there must be some examples of the kind; for God is not accustomed to hide his works of goodness and mercy, but rather to make them public to his own honor and praise. You must be able to refer to a number of cases in which it has been granted, and is still granted. Because if one or another has had the luck to find a treasure, that is no reason for you to give up your business in the hope of becoming rich all at once, unless, indeed, you are a fool.

Joseph was brought out of a prison and placed on the throne of Egypt; which of us will therefore go to Egypt among the Turks and allow himself to be chained and fettered in the hope of being promoted to some high dignity? Jonas was swallowed by a whale and thrown out again on the seashore alive; will any one of you throw himself into the sea in the hope of being saved from drowning in a similar manner? You would not attempt

it. A certain Phalaræus was suffering from a cancer in the head; maddened by the pain, he rushed into the middle of a fierce battle to end at once his miserable life; but an arrow happened to strike the wound and opened it, so that the poisonous matter escaped and freed him from his suffering. If one of you had a similar disease, would he run into the midst of a street broil, and rush upon the spears and swords, in the hope of being cured? I hardly think so. For that which occurs rarely cannot be taken as a general rule.

Now, oh, sinner! give me, if you can, an example of real conversion where repentance was deferred till the hour of death! There is but one well-authenticated case, and that is the good thief on Calvary, the only instance of the kind in the history of the world. "There is one," says St. Augustine; "do not despair; it is the only one, do not trust too presumptuously." There was one such case, but of such a nature that it ought to make you tremble. For, in what circumstances did the good thief obtain forgiveness? At the moment when his God was hanging by his side on the cross, and about to give up his life for the salvation of the world. Was it any wonder that Christ should then give some public testimony of the efficacy of his death, or show some extraordinary proof of mercy on the occasion of the consummation of his Passion and death? And yet it was only one to whom that mercy was shown; the other thief, who was also at the side of the dying Saviour, was hurried off to hell by the devils.

I could bring forward many examples (from Scripture and Ecclesiastical History) of people whose experience on their death-beds has been quite the contrary to that of the good thief, and who were condemned to hell without mercy. What St. Paul writes of Esau seems most mournful; he had been living a bad life, and still hoped to inherit the blessing: "Afterwards when he desired to inherit the benediction, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, although with tears he had

sought it" (Hebr. 12 : 17). Something of the same kind happened to the wicked Antiochus. This unhappy king had his eyes opened at last, when he fell into a disgusting and grievous illness. "Ah," he sighed, as he was being eaten alive by worms, "it is just to be subject to God" (2 Mach. 9 : 12). What would you say, my dear brethren, if you saw a man dying in such dispositions? Would you not look on him as a saint and wish to be in his place? But hear what the Scripture says of this penitent; words that I would not dare to utter if they were not from the mouth of God himself; words which as long as the world lasts will remain as a warning to sinners who trust their salvation to a death-bed repentance: "Then this wicked man prayed to the Lord, of whom he was not like to obtain mercy" (2 Mach. 9 : 13). And why not? "Because he did not ask for mercy in due time, nor with a sincere heart." Not at the proper time, because he put it off till the last moment; nor with a sincere heart, because it was not the love of God, nor the supernatural fear of punishment, but simply the dread of death that inspired him with repentance.

I could say the same to you, oh, sinner! if you appeal to the experience of the dying in our own days, as is generally done. We see here and there, you maintain, so many Christians who, although they have led wicked and reckless lives, yet die a happy death as good, pious Christians. But are you sure of that? Oh, yes! they repent of and confess their sins; they receive the holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction; they sigh and pray with those who are standing round; they often kiss the crucifix and press it to their bosoms, and depart with the exhortations and blessings of the priest still ringing in their ears. And do you call that a holy, Christian death? Ah, how little it costs to make saints! "We make saints in a day of those who contribute nothing to the process but a good will!" All we want is a day, an hour, nay, almost a few moments, and with one act of the will we become holy. I should not like to share

the lot of those who are supposed to have thus died holy and Christian deaths. If nothing more were necessary to make a man die happy, then even the most wicked sinners are saved. For what Catholic is there who does not give some signs of repentance and receive the last Sacraments, if possible, when he feels the approach of death? If nothing more were required for a happy death, then all those who say "Lord! Lord!" should go to heaven; yet we have the express word of God to the contrary; and no one who has despised God during his life would be abandoned by God at the end, although that is again contrary to the word of God: "I will laugh in your destruction;" and all who in their lives turn a deaf ear to the voice of God should find him in that moment if they seek him, and should not die in the state of sin; but that, too, is against the word of God: "You shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin." Why has Christ described the way to heaven as difficult, narrow and hard to find? Why does he warn us so impressively? "Strive to enter by the narrow gate: for many, I say to you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able" (Luke 13 : 24). And could I not think to myself: What is the use of going to so much trouble? I will live as I please, and indulge my senses as I see others doing; when I feel that death is at hand I can confess my sins, and go to heaven. Do not trust to such a confession, holy Communion or Extreme Unction, if they are not preceded by a Christian life, for otherwise these Sacraments are not received at the proper time or with a sincere heart.

Ask the holy Fathers, those enlightened interpreters of Scripture, what they think of such a repentance. Ask St. Isidore; he calls it suspicious. Ask St. Bernard; he calls it rash and presumptuous. Ask SS. Cyprian, Ambrose, Gregory, Chrysostom, Thomas of Aquin; they laugh at such a repentance as utterly ridiculous, and, generally speaking, useless. "I dare not say," writes St. Augustine, "that one or the other individual who has repented on his death-bed is lost forever; but I cannot

have much hope that he is in heaven. It is true that the confessions of such dying people are received by the Church; but I do not think they are much to be depended on. I do not trust in them. I do not wish to deceive you; but I do not trust in them. I can exhort such a man to repent; I can hear his confession and give him absolution; but I cannot say that the absolution will have any effect. I trust little in such confessions." Eusebius writes that when St. Jerome was dying he was asked to give his disciples a last lesson, and he said these words: "Of a hundred thousand men who have always led bad lives hardly one deserves pardon from God."

On what, then, do you ground your hope, oh, sinner! you who defer repentance to the last moment? Do you think that an exception will be made in your favor contrary to the general decrees of God and to what experience teaches us of the death of sinners? Or do you imagine that you will be the one in a hundred thousand to whom God will give the special grace of conversion at the end? Will you trust your eternity to such a desperate chance? Ah, "Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee" (Ecclus. 5 : 8, 9). Do not wait till the end; do penance at once, and that sincerely; at once amend your life, if you seriously intend escaping hell and going to heaven!

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE WORTHLESSNESS OF A DEATHBED REPENTANCE.

"*Go first to be reconciled to thy brother.*"—Matt. 5 : 24.

Oh, sinner! you are living at variance and enmity with God! Yet you hope and desire one day to offer your soul into his hands, to die a happy death, and to go to heaven. But you have something to do first; "be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5 : 20). And when do you mean to do that? After a while? Ah, that is too dangerous. At the end, in your last illness? Oh, that is far worse; your state will be even desperate then! Go first and be reconciled to your God. When death is at hand it will be too late; God himself denies you all hope of conversion then, and experience denies it you also. But why should repentance in the last moment be such a desperate chance? God is still as merciful and desirous of our salvation as he ever was, and the human will is still free, and can then change itself, and, moreover, penance has still the same efficacy in obtaining pardon from God. Do you ask why? I will tell you:

I. The grace of true conversion and a happy death is far too great for the sinner to expect in his last illness.

II. The sick man is then far too weak to be able to correspond with the grace of God and to repent sincerely.

I. The grace that enables a man to arise from the state of sin and to be truly converted, is a powerful, special grace, coming from the goodness of God alone—a grace that he is not bound

to give to any one. Therefore, he who has transgressed the commandments in a serious matter has good reason to beg from God most humbly the grace of true repentance. The grace of conversion at the last moment, the grace of final perseverance, and a happy death is the most excellent of all; it is one that no man, no matter how holy his life has been, with all his good works, can merit in the strict acceptation of the term. And you, oh, sinner! expect all this powerful and almost miraculous grace? And from whom do you expect it? From an angry God, whom you have provoked a thousand times, and whose patience you have worn out? When do you expect it? When you have spent your life in all kinds of wickedness; constantly kept your ears shut to God's inspirations, despised his warnings and threats, trampled so often on the precious blood he shed for you; when you see that you are on the point of leaving the world and entering into eternity? When you are tired of sin, or, to speak more truly, when you are no longer able to sin? When you have no more time left to serve God? Then he has to be ready for you, and give you the greatest and most powerful of all graces that he has ever given to his Saints who are in heaven? What are you dreaming of? Where is your reason? Where your common sense?

As you are lying on your bed of sickness, pray as fervently as you know how for that grace; your own despairing conscience will give you the same answer that Samuel gave the unhappy Saul. The latter was surrounded by his enemies; he knew not what to do, and in his anguish he cried out to the dead prophet: Oh, Samuel, holy Prophet! help me in my necessity; "I am in great distress; for the Philistines fight against me;....therefore I have called thee that thou mayest show me what I shall do." "Why askest thou me?" was the answer, "seeing the Lord has departed from thee?" "He will rend thy kingdom out of thy hand....And the Lord also will deliver Israel with thee into the hands of the Philistines," and to-morrow you and your

sons shall be slain, "because thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord" (1 Kings 28 : 15, 19). Your conscience, oh, sinner! will make you the same reproach on your death-bed. What do you ask or desire in your anguish from that Lord whom you have made your enemy, refusing to be reconciled to him during life, and remaining his enemy till death? When the merciful God offered you the grace of repentance you should have cried out to him; then you might have confesed your sins, and having begun to amend your life, have humbly begged for the grace of perseverance and a happy death. But in vain do you now expect that favor from your bitter enemy. But you need not wait long to find out all about this; to-day you will be in eternity, and then you will see how matters stand. Hear the words of our Lord himself: "Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord. And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me, you that work iniquity" (Matt. 7 : 22, 23). So did God act towards the wicked Israelites, when in the time of their affliction they said: Arise, and deliver us, he answered them: Where are thy gods, whom thou hast made thee? Let them arise and deliver thee in the time of thy affliction" (Jer. 2 : 27, 28). Sinner, you shall also hear those words in your extremity! Where are the gods you have adored and honored in your lifetime? Where are the idols, oh, unchaste man! whom you loved more than me? Where is your wealth, oh, miser! that you looked on as your god? "Let them arise and deliver thee in the time of thy affliction;" call now upon those gods of yours, and see if they can save you from hell! You have not known me during your life; neither will I know you now in your death.

You shall be asked, when you pray for grace at the end of your life: Do you now seek for time to repent, when you have finished the time of your life? What have you been doing all these years? God has given you time enough to prepare for death. You have seen many other Christians go to holy Communion almost every month; did you ever take the trouble to

receive it once a year? You have heard so many sermons; have you ever tried to profit by them and to amend your life? You have often seen the confessional ready to receive you and relieve you of the burden of your sins; have you ever even once made a candid confession with true sorrow and a firm purpose of amendment? What were you doing from morning till night but spending your time in pleasures and pastimes and in the pursuit of temporal gain, heaping sin on sin, as if God had given you time only for that purpose? And now, when time is no more for you, you ask for an opportunity to make good the great loss? No, that cannot be; your prayer cannot be granted. Ah, unhappy man! do not trust to a future repentance, which is to be when you see that you are about to die. Supposing, however, that there will then be still room for you in the divine mercy, and that God will not refuse you the powerful grace of conversion, yet on your own side all hopes of salvation must vanish; for then you shall be neither disposed nor able to work with the grace of God so as to be truly converted.

II. He who thinks that he will be able to repent sincerely at the end of an ill-spent life shows that he does not understand what is meant by sincere repentance. It is easy enough to confess your sins, and if the priest asks you whether you are heartily sorry for having offended the good God, to answer yes, and if he further inquires whether you wish to be absolved and to receive the last Sacraments, to say yes to that, too. But is that sufficient to obtain pardon of your sins? If such were the case, how many Christians would be in heaven who are actually burning in hell! Do you wish to know what it means to do true penance? It is to love sincerely and earnestly what you before hated against the law of God; to hate what you before loved contrary to the divine will, and to detest, curse and reprobate all such unlawful thoughts, words and actions; to love God more than all joys, goods, honors and creatures in

the world; to hate and detest your sins more than all imaginable evils, pains and troubles in the world, nay, more than death itself, and all that from a supernatural motive. Is it likely that such a sudden change will take place, and that one who has grown old in vice, who has loved sin all his life, and who is leaving it now through force, nay, who would not leave it if he had not death before his eyes; who has seldom made an act of the love of God, or of supernatural sorrow; who, while he was strong and healthy, had such frequent opportunities of repenting with the full force of his reason, and who, instead of using them, said: I cannot give up sin now; I cannot yet amend my life; I cannot do penance for a while longer; is it likely, I ask, that a man of that kind will change so suddenly as to do sincere penance in so short a time, and at such an inconvenient time, too?

When a large door has been kept fast bolted for twenty years or more without being opened, so that its hinges are rusted, can a weak man open it at once? Not by any means. "Behold," the Almighty has often said before to such a dying man, "I stand at the gate and knock; if any man shall hear my voice, and open to me the door, I will come in to him" (Apoc. 3 : 20). Now, after all the knocking for so many years, the sinner could not make up his mind to open the door of his heart to the Lord by true repentance, so that it has become, as it were, quite rusted; how, then, will he be able to open it in a hurry when he hears death knocking? Ah, it cost St. Augustine the labor of twelve whole years to combat himself and overcome his evil inclinations and bad habits, and at last it required almost a miracle to change him. Can the dying sinner expect that miracle in the short time that remains to him when he is told that he is in a dangerous state and must die? No, indeed! He will be like so many others, who died with the bad habits and desires in which they lived.

Such people do not even dream of doing penance; and if they

attempt it, how could they manage it successfully at so unsuitable a time? For when the weakened body is filled with pain and anguish the sick man's only thought is how to procure some alleviation; the doctor is at hand to prescribe medicines for him; his friends are there to see that he is in as comfortable a position as possible and to prevent others from wearying him by talk; his mind is filled with fear, anxiety, care and terror on account of having to leave the world and bid adieu to his sorrowing relations. He is so disturbed at the approach of death that, as experience tells us, he is hardly able to say a Hail Mary with due devotion. The sick man will agree to all the priest says to him; he will express sorrow for his sins; he will kiss the crucifix; he will pray for forgiveness and receive absolution, holy Communion, Extreme Unction, and the general absolution. Do you think, therefore, that he must die well? But what else could a Christian do? Do you imagine he must throw away the crucifix with disgust; refuse to express sorrow for his sins, to receive absolution or holy Communion? No Catholic would act in that way unless he were mad and out of his senses. But do you believe that he does all those pious actions with sincerity and from a supernatural motive? No; the dying man does not know at all what he does and says. It is easy to get an echo even from the hardest rocks and mountains. Call out the name of Jesus between the rocks, and they will answer Jesus; not because they understand what they say, but because the echo gives back your voice. So it is generally with such dying people. When a man lives a bad life, and puts off conversion till the last moment, what else is his heart but a rock hardened against the grace of God? Now, a man of this kind is lying on his sick bed; you go to him and say: Jesus! He answers: Jesus! You say: Mary, Mother of mercy! He repeats: Mary, Mother of mercy! Are you not sorry that you have offended God? Yes; I am sorry. If you should be restored to health, will you not serve him faithfully? Yes; I will!

You wish to go to heaven? Yes. Oh, my God, I believe in thee! Oh, my God, I believe in thee! I hope in thee! I hope in thee! I love thee! I love thee! There is nothing more that troubles your conscience? No; nothing more. A person looking on at this might be inclined to say: Thanks be to God! he is well prepared! Simple-minded man! it was, after all, but an echo from the hard rock you heard, and the sick man's sighs and tears were caused merely by bodily pain. If you do not believe this ask all those who have received the last Sacraments in a dangerous illness and have recovered again how they felt on the occasion. Many will tell you that they felt quite stupid; the most will acknowledge that they hardly knew whether they were receiving the Sacraments or not. If those people had died they would have been considered as having been well prepared. Well prepared, indeed!

"Therefore, whilst we have time, let us work good" (Gal. 6 : 10). Now, whilst we are sound in mind and body, let us make use of the golden opportunity and serve God zealously! We must not trust to the time of sickness. Sinners! now that you can do it conveniently, be converted sincerely to God! You must not imagine that what I have said concerns you little, as none of you may be minded to defer repentance till the last moment, and all of you may be resolved to repent before the hour of death, although not at once. Ah! I believe you. But almost all those who have been surprised by death in the state of sin have been of the same mind as you are now. They have said to themselves: On some future occasion I will go to confession and amend my life; bye-and-bye I will begin to serve God faithfully; until at last, before their bye-and-bye came, they fell into a mortal illness, so that in reality they deferred repentance to the hour of death. "Be you then also ready; for at what hour you think not the Son of man will come" (Luke 12 : 40). Delay no longer! Prepare now while you have the time of grace to dispose of. Think what depends on this. Nothing

less than the eternal fire of hell, in which you will burn, if the Lord, when he comes for you at the hour of death, does not find you prepared. Nothing less than the eternal happiness of heaven depends on it if you repent sincerely and amend in time. Amen.

Sixth Sunday After Pentecost.

POWERFUL MEANS OF SALVATION THAT ALL MEN HAVE AT HAND.

"*Taking the seven loaves, giving thanks he broke, and gave to his disciples for to set before them, and they set them before the people.*"—Mark 8 : 6.

Four thousand hungry people! What a number to provide for! No wonder that the disciples exclaimed in astonishment: "From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness?" And yet the merciful, and at the same time Almighty Lord, who did not wish the people to suffer the pangs of hunger or to faint on the way, so increased the scanty supply that there was more than enough to still the hunger of the whole multitude. There you have a figure and symbol of the care that the good God, who is so desirous of the salvation of all men, takes of their souls, that nothing may be wanting to them on the way to eternity. Many are called; not four thousand, but all are called to follow Christ on this way. God has an earnest wish and desire that all men should gain heaven. But where can so many millions find nourishment on their way to heaven? That is, where shall they find the means of attaining this end? The Almighty God, who loves us so much, knows how to provide for all abundantly.

The Almighty has prepared for all men, not only necessary and sufficient, but frequent, abundant, and as far as he is concerned, efficacious graces and helps, and if they wish to co-operate with them, they can easily gain heaven.

It is an article of Faith. God has prepared necessary graces and sufficient means for all men to work out their salvation if they only wish to co-operate with those graces. For if God has the earnest, sincere and efficacious will that all men should be saved, then he must provide men with those means and graces without which it is impossible to gain heaven. Otherwise he would wish and require of men something that he well knows they cannot do. No; we have in God a most generous Father, who is not satisfied with providing for his adopted children, whom he has created for heaven, merely those graces that are absolutely necessary for their salvation, but he is ready to give to all men frequent, abundant, and, as far as their efficacy is concerned, most powerful graces and helps, with which they can easily, if they wish, merit heaven.

Can any one then excuse his vicious life by blaming the parsimony of the Almighty, and saying that he had not grace, and therefore found it too hard to restrain his wicked passions and keep the commandments? If so, then our Lord did not speak the truth when he invited all men to serve him: "Take up my yoke upon you,.... and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet, and my burden light" (Matt. 11 : 29, 30). Before his ascension into heaven he said to his Apostles and their successors: "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16 : 15). Hence the observance of the Gospel law, for which heaven is promised as an eternal reward, can and will be a sweet yoke and a light burden for all who wish. But how shall it be sweet and light? We cannot see that if we consider the Gospel law as it is in itself and in its own nature, for it is very difficult to our senses, and is opposed

in nearly everything to our natural inclinations, as is evident from the words of our Lord: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. 11 : 12). Now if, in spite of this, the Gospel law is for all men a sweet yoke, a light burden, it must be made so by the frequent and great graces that God is willing to give to all who desire and wish for them. True, these graces do not take away all the difficulties at once, yet they enable him who works with them easily to overcome obstacles that in themselves are hard to deal with; they give him strength to mortify himself willingly, to do violence to himself with pleasure, and so easily to abstain from forbidden things.

To explain this. There lies a sick man in a violent fever; he is tormented with thirst, and knows not what to do; but he can be cured if he calls in the doctor. He is forbidden to drink, and told that if he does not obey that command he will die. What do you think? Is that an easy or a hard thing for him? As long as the heat of the fever last and he suffers thirst, it is almost unbearable; if you put a cup of water near him, he cannot possibly refrain from drinking it; he will do what he can to get hold of it, and drink it up most eagerly. Whether I die or not, he says, I cannot stand this thirst any longer. On the other hand, it is easy enough for him to abstain from drinking if he uses the means prescribed; when that is done the heat of the fever disappears, and the thirst is quenched of itself. So it is with a sinner. His fever is the vice to which he is addicted; the thirst is that violent inclination to that which God has forbidden under pain of eternal death. Tell the proud man that he must humble himself; the avaricious man not to love money; the unchaste man to renounce carnal lusts; the vindictive man to forgive his enemy; as long as the fever and thirst of desire last, he will answer: Ah, I cannot; it is impossible! But tell him to beg humbly the help and grace of God, which God is ready to give him, and the heat of the desire will be moderated, and he will

easily overcome difficulties that in themselves are grave enough. But if he refuses to employ that easy means, whom is he to blame for the insuperable difficulty he finds in keeping the commandments? Is he not himself in fault by his obstinacy in not asking the divine assistance, or not working with the graces given him, which would have made it easy for him to conquer his passions, as many know from their own experience, who, having once made up their minds to serve God, have laid down the burden of their sins by a good confession? Hence, if the law of the Gospel, that is in itself difficult, becomes, according to the assurance of our Lord, a sweet yoke and a light burden, then it must be sweetened and lightened, not by small, weak, and barely necessary graces, but by great, copious and superabundant ones. From which again it is clear that as all men are called to the sweet yoke and light burden of Jesus Christ and it is to be sweet and light for all, that God has prepared, or is ready to prepare, for all men, great, frequent, powerful, superabundant graces; and if men wish to co-operate with them, they shall easily be enabled to keep the Christian law, and therefore to gain heaven.

This generosity he shows even to unreasoning and senseless creatures, although he has made them only for the use of man. How liberally and abundantly he provides wild beasts with all that is necessary to preserve their lives according to their different kinds! There is no living thing so small and mean that does not know where to find its certain food and nourishment; if it is sick, it knows where to look for medicine; if it is persecuted by another, it has arms to defend itself or means of taking to flight, so that it may either protect itself or avoid its foe. The trees and all plants have numbers of little veins by which they absorb the sap that they require as nourishment according to their different natures; the winds, the dews, the rains, the sunlight and nearly all the heavenly bodies attend on their wants, to provide them with heat, or cold, or drought, or moisture, or

light, or shade at different times, as their preservation and growth require. How beautifully the earth is adorned with meadows and forests, with mountains and valleys, with streams and rivers, that it may serve, not only as the necessary, but as a comfortable and pleasant dwelling for man! And what is most surprising, this vast, ponderous globe hangs in mid-air, in which even a feather could not remain for a moment without falling to the ground; and it hangs there so immovably that for the last six thousand years and more it has not moved either to the right or the left, supported by the careful providence of God alone.

And what are we to think of the human body, which is justly called a little world? What a number of different members it has to perform its actions, not with difficulty, and only as far as necessity requires, but with ease, comfort and pleasure, when, where and how it pleases. God has given it eyes to see with, that it may behold the beauties of the world and know its fellows; he has provided those eyes with covers, that when they do not wish to see they may shut themselves up and remain hidden; he has given it feet that it may be able to move from one place to the other according as it wishes; hands, that it may defend itself when necessary, work and support itself; a voice and speech that it may make known its hidden thoughts and the secrets of its heart; ears that it may understand the speech of others. Everything that the wide world holds and produces is for its use and enjoyment.

Now, if God is so generous to all his creatures, so munificent in providing the means necessary for a merely natural end, could any one suspect him of being parsimonious only to men, and of giving them the graces and gifts necessary for their salvation in such a small and niggardly way as to enable them to attain their last end, that is, heaven, only with difficulty and great exertion? Does God then show greater love and care for dumb animals, nay, for senseless and lifeless things, than for the

immortal souls that he has made to his own image, and that Jesus Christ has appointed heirs of the heavenly kingdom? Is the heavenly Father more generous and liberal to the trees and plants than to his own children? more careful of the creatures that are made solely for the use of man than of man himself, who is the end, the lord and master of all creatures? And shall God be more careful of and generous to the human body, which is, after all, only a tool and servant of the soul, a dwelling in which the latter is to work out its salvation, than to the soul itself, which is the master and lord of the dwelling?

And why should we require arguments to convince us of this since we know it already by experience? For who shall count the graces and helps that the Catholic Church possesses in such abundance to free her children from sin, to preserve them in grace, to deter them from evil, to instruct them in good, and so to bring them to heaven? How many holy sacrifices there are in which the flesh and blood of Jesus are daily offered to the heavenly Father as an infinite thanksgiving for all benefits received, an infinite atonement for all sin committed, and as a means of obtaining all the blessings we stand in need of? How many Sacraments, by the worthy reception of which we can, as often as we please, increase sanctifying grace, and obtain more actual graces? How many indulgences, which the Catholic Church so freely bestows out of the treasury of the merits of Christ and his Saints, by which we can wipe out the debt of punishment that still remains due for our sins? How many spiritual books that we may read, how many sermons that we may hear, how many explanations of Christian doctrine that we may attend? All these are intended to enlighten our ignorance, to impress on our minds the fear and love of God, to encourage us to do good, to arouse in our hearts a desire of heavenly things, and, as it were, to force us with violence into heaven. How many examples of the wicked to deter us from sin, of those good and zealous Christians who are still alive and

of the holy citizens of heaven to spur us on to imitate their zeal, their virtues and their holiness of life? Ah, how many ways we have to lead us to heaven! Blind mortals that we are! if we only made a good use of the hundredth part of the graces and means at our disposal! Nay, if many a one employed for his salvation the hundredth part of the labor and trouble he takes to lose his soul, there would be hardly one excluded from heaven. Ask any Christian, even the most abandoned, even one who is buried head and ears in vice, if he has not experienced during his life that he has received thousands of benefits from God; if he has not felt thousands of graces, opportunities, secret impulses, and movements of the heart to return to God and do penance. And if he wishes to speak the truth he must say: Ah, yes! I cannot deny it. Ask him further whether he can honestly say that God is to blame for his not having led a better life, if grace has been wanting to him, and therefore if the fault of his vices and sins can be attributed to the parsimony with which God treated him. Again he must answer: No; but I did not wish to profit by grace. And the same will be the confession of every sinner.

In a word, let others fight and argue with each other as long as they choose about eternal predestination to heaven; it still remains, and must remain, true for all men who are shut out of heaven, because it is the infallible word of God himself, what the Lord says by the prophet Osee: "Destruction is thy own, oh, Israel! thy help is only in me" (Osee 13 : 9). Your eternal damnation, oh, man! whoever you be, comes from yourself, because you did not wish to save your soul.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

AVOIDING IDLENESS IF WE WISH TO GAIN HEAVEN.

"Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire."—Matt 7 : 19.

These words should be weighed attentively by all those who spend the most of their time in incessant worldly cares, or in idleness, doing nothing, vain amusements and useless occupations. Do these people imagine that such a life will bring them to heaven? No, for "not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. But he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." And what is to become of those good-for-nothing people who produce no fruit of good work? "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire." In a word, idlers shall have no share in heaven, for:

An idle life can bring no man to eternal life. Therefore he who desires to go to heaven must avoid idleness.

A vicious life cannot lead to eternal life; an idle life is a vicious one, and therefore an idle life cannot lead any one to eternal life. An idle life is a vicious life. Idleness opens the door to all sorts of sin and vice. Idleness is an enemy to virtue, a betrayer of youth, a spendthrift of time, a dangerous sleep, a poison for the souls of men, an incentive to impurity, a pleasing guest of hell, a soft cushion of the devil, a luxurious bed of all evil. Idleness is the mother of all concupiscence, uncleanness and sin. Idleness is, as it were, the mistress of all vices—a

cesspool of temptations and bad thoughts. In a word, St. Augustine gives no hope of salvation to the idle man who has no becoming occupation: "He who loves idleness shall never be a citizen of heaven."

The infallible word of God says: "Send him to work, that he be not idle." No matter who the person may be, of what sex or condition, rich or poor, young or old, let that person work, and have something to do and be not idle. Why? "For idleness hath taught much evil" (Ecclus. 33 : 28, 29).

Natural philosophers tell us that the human understanding in our working moments can never be idle, but must be always thinking of something. So too the heart and will of man can never be without some inclination; they must always have some object to love or hate, to desire or detest. Suppose now that a man or woman, a boy or girl is idly walking, standing or sitting, with no proper occupation; no study or reflection for the mind, no work for the body; what then goes on in the understanding? for it must have something to think of. Under the circumstances the only thoughts that occupy it are vain, useless, dangerous or sinful; and from such thoughts can come nothing but vain, useless, dangerous or sinful affections, inclinations and desires of the heart. The human heart and mind are like the millstones that turn as long as the water drives the wheel; if the miller puts in wheat, they grind that; if oats, they grind oats; if he puts nothing in they grind each other and make fire and flames. No matter how fertile a field is, if it is not tilled, and is allowed to lie idle, it can produce nothing but thistles and weeds of all sorts. In the same way, when the soul has nothing to do, no useful or necessary occupation, it gives itself up to evil actions. Stagnant water that has no movement or outlet becomes foul and miry, and brings forth only worms and hideous things; clear water, if it is led over a field or garden, brings forth grass and beautiful flowers; but if allowed to run idly over the streets, it gets mixed with the dust and makes mud and dirt.

Our hearts and minds are ever-flowing fountains of thoughts and desires; if they are busied with good and praiseworthy work, they must of necessity produce beautiful flowers and excellent fruit; but if they are permitted to run about the streets after vain and sensual objects, nothing can come from them but filth and mire.

Idleness is called the devil's pillow. Never does this hateful enemy, who is always on the watch to ensnare our souls, find a better opportunity of spreading abroad his wicked inspirations and temptations, especially in the matter of impurity, than when he finds men idle. Therefore, there is no better remedy for evil thoughts and desires than hard work and constant occupation. Do something, that when the devil comes he may always find you busy; then he will leave you and say to himself: there is no hearing for me now. And if sometimes you are plagued with these thoughts during your work, act as if they did not concern you, and go on with your work without fear or anxiety; when the devil sees that you pay no attention to him, he will despair of being able to do you any harm and will leave you in peace.

While the Israelites were burdened with hard labor in the Egyptian slavery they never thought of impurity or idolatry. Their circumstances were such that they had no time or inclination for such things. But when they were freed from slavery by the goodness of God, and were idle and unoccupied in the desert; when the bread was sent them miraculously from heaven, and they knew not how to pass the time except in eating, and drinking, and amusing themselves, then they determined to have the golden calf as their god, who led them, as they thought, out of Egypt; then all sorts of excesses took the upper hand. David, if he had not sat idly at his window after the midday sleep, would never have committed those horrible sins that he did afterwards bitterly bewail day and night. Samson, when the Philistines left him in peace, and he did begin to

repose in the lap of Delilah, lost his strength and his eyes and became a laughing-stock to his enemies! And Solomon, as long as he was busied with the building of the temple, was a dear child of God; that wretched, peaceful and idle enjoyment of his goods filled his heart with the love of women, and turned him into a shameless idolater.

Parents should not wonder at the wickedness of their children when they are brought up in idleness. Fathers and mothers, God has entrusted your children to you, binding you by a grievous obligation to look after their souls and to bring them to heaven. You often complain of the conduct of your sons and daughters; you say that your children already know and speak of things that they should not know anything of for the next twenty years; that from day to day they grow more independent, vain, unruly, and indeed if you could see into their consciences you would find far worse things that do not appear in their faces. Whence comes this? Reflect a little on the training you give your children; examine how they spend the day from morning till night; see if they do not perhaps sit on the cushion on which the devil takes his rest. You may be quite certain that idleness is the mother of all concupiscence and sin; you need not have the slightest doubt of this; idleness is the bellows that blows up the flames of impurity and wantonness and all other vices. How is it possible, if the son has nothing to do but eat, drink, sleep and roam about the streets, if the devil finds him always making a holiday; how is it possible for that wicked spirit not to lead him into all kinds of sin and evil? How is it possible, if the daughter has no occupation but adorning and tricking herself out; no other teaching or instruction but how she is to make courtesies and pay compliments, how she is to talk and dance; if she is allowed full liberty to attend all kinds of parties; if she finds the smoke of the kitchen too sharp for her eyes; if the needle hurts her hands; if the smoothing-iron is too hard for her hands; if housework is too

hard or too low for her; if her whole occupation consists in talking, joking, laughing, sitting at the window or before the door; how is it possible that in such circumstances innocence, piety, modesty, purity should escape getting into danger and being lost? There is not the least doubt that idleness is the sole root of all this mischief.

Do not allow idleness into the house; keep the children working diligently, and then things will go better. And do not let the piety of your daughters deceive you in this particular; they may wish to spend the whole morning in the church, and to be present at vespers and other devotions in the afternoon. I do not say that those things are not good, but they are not always real devotions with every one; sometimes they are prompted by a spirit of freedom, weariness of being alone, love of idleness, curiosity, the desire to see and be seen. There is no better inheritance you can leave your children, no more useful dowry for their future wedding day, than, besides the fear of God, a love and relish for suitable work. This is the best means of preserving their temporal goods and saving their souls from sins and vice.

What, some of you will say, do you wish to make us all work? You must know that we do not need to earn our bread in that way; we have, thank God! enough to live on; we belong to rich, respectable families, and it would not be becoming in us to toil and work; we have servants to do that for us. Now, I am, indeed, glad to hear that you are rich. I wish you joy, and hope that it may last! But that does not excuse you from honorable work and occupation; that is no reason why you should be always idle. The good of a serious occupation is not merely earning one's livelihood; the chief reason is to avoid opening the door to sin and vice by idleness, so that we may save our souls. Consider that house which the Holy Ghost describes to us. In it there was an abundance of all good things, and it was as well provided as the ship that does not leave the land until it

is filled with all necessaries; its numerous servants were all well fed, clothed and provided for. The master sat in the council and took his place among the senators of the land; the mistress was clothed in rich apparel; in a word, everything was in such good order that there was nothing which one could envy in another house. In the midst of these riches, what did the mistress do in the house? Did she occupy herself, as she might have done, in going to parties, walking, gambling and visiting? Hear the words of the Holy Ghost: "She hath sought wool and flax, and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands;" mark this, Christian women and maidens! "She is like the merchant's ship; she bringeth her bread from afar." So diligent was she in her housework that she even interrupted her night's rest: "She hath risen in the night, and given a prey to her household, and victuals to her maidens. She hath put out her hand to strong things, and her fingers have taken hold of the spindle." In a word: "She....hath not eaten her bread idle." Was that amount of labor necessary for such a woman? By no means, but she occupied herself thus in order to please God. Therefore she merited the name of a God-fearing woman: "The woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates" (Prov. 31 : 13, 15, 19, 27, 30, 31). Those holy hermits of olden times who lived on herbs and roots, and wove baskets the whole day, did not do so for the sake of earning their living or making money, for when a basket was finished they would unweave it and commence it again; their only object was to avoid idleness and always to have something to do, some work in hand. Charlemagne, the great Christian emperor, had his sons taught different trades and professions, while his daughters had to spin and were not allowed to wear any linen or lace but what they had made themselves. What do you think of this? These people belonged to a princely, an imperial family;

and they worked, not for their daily bread, but for the sake of their souls.

You do not need to work, you say, in order to earn your bread. Very good, but you must work to earn heaven. Even if an idle life brought no sin or vice in its train, no special temptation, it still could not lead to heaven. For what is eternal happiness and to whom is it promised? It is a reward that is given to every one according to his works. "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his Angels, and then will he render to every man according to his works" (Matt. 16 : 27). Heaven is a penny that will not be given to any one unless to him who has labored till evening. Therefore, the usual excuse is of no avail: If I do nothing, I do no harm. What! no harm? To do nothing is in itself harmful. You have a piece of land which is so hard that it produces no thistles or thorns or weeds, but neither does it produce good fruit; is that good land? No. It is worth nothing to you. The heavenly householder will one day ask us the question that was put to the idlers in the Gospel: "Why stand you here all the day idle?" (Matt. 20 : 6.) He will not say: why stand you here, wicked and unjust people? Why do you hinder others from working? Why do you destroy my vineyard? But: "Why stand you here all the day idle?" "Go you also into my vineyard" (Matt. 20 : 7); work, or you have no reward to expect. No; never will any one who loves idleness become a citizen of heaven.

Eighth Sunday After Pentecost.

THE REASON FOR THE LAST JUDGMENT.

"*Give an account of thy stewardship.*"—Luke 16: 2.

Is it not an article of faith that every man shall be judged immediately after death, and sent into eternal glory or eternal torments? Why, then, should men appear again to hear another sentence? Is not the first one good and just enough, as it is pronounced by an infallible Judge? Not a doubt of it! What is, then, the object of a new examination and judgment? Will the last judgment perhaps make some change in the first? Not at all; the sentence once uttered shall not be recalled. On the last day each one shall hear the same sentence that was pronounced on him at the particular judgment on the last day of his life, at the moment of death, and no other. If I am then condemned to hell, I shall certainly hear in the last judgment the words: "Depart, accursed!" If I am then admitted to the kingdom of heaven, I shall certainly hear on the last day the words: "Come, ye blessed!" What is then the use of a general judgment? Several reasons are assigned for it, from which I shall select two principal ones, the first of which concerns God, and the second us mortals. The first I shall speak of to-day:

I. There must necessarily be a general judgment that God may publicly, in the sight of the whole world, make good his lessened honor.

II. There must necessarily be a general judgment, that God may publicly, in the sight of the whole world, justify his now incomprehensible providence.

I. Why do most men give God so little of the honor due to him, and are so backward in fearing and loving him? Because they have but a dark knowledge of his majesty. We do not know what a great Lord he is, and how worthy of honor, fear and love. It is true, God is the absolute Lord and Master of all time, of every moment of our lives. But we often refuse to act on this truth; we show by our conduct that we believe quite the contrary, for we misspend our precious time given us by God in a most foolish manner, wasting it in idleness, vanity, gluttony, the lusts of the flesh, and useless amusements. God is almighty, and present in all places; at any moment he has the power of reducing us to nothing, if such is his will. We often refuse to act on that knowledge; otherwise should we, poor, despicable creatures as we are, so often rebel against him, offend him so audaciously, and before his very eyes trample his law under foot? God is the sworn Enemy and Chastiser of sin, and his infinite justice will not allow the least transgression to go unpunished, unless it has been fully atoned for. We often refuse to act on that knowledge; otherwise should we dare to offend him so presumptuously? Do we not falsely imagine that we are free from all punishment when we spend whole weeks, months and years in sin, calmly and quietly, as if there were no one in heaven or on earth from whom we have anything to fear? We separate the divine mercy and justice from each other, and imagine that justice must always give way before and yield to mercy; we look on justice as an idle attribute of God, that never upholds its rights and leaves everything to mercy. God is good, we say; God is patient; he is ready to forgive, and therefore it makes little matter how one lives. Thus, through want of a proper knowledge of God, his honor is often lessened and despised.

Hence there must come a time in which God will avenge his honor, and publicly show before the world what he is. And that will be the last day of general judgment, which is therefore

called in Holy Writ "the day of the Lord." Then shall all see how bitter is the hatred God has against sin and the sinner, and how he will not allow the smallest transgression to go unpunished; for he will demand an account even of an idle word or thought; nay, he will judge the justices and holiest works of men, and put them to the proof to see if they are according to his will and pleasure. All shall then see that God has no respect for persons; rich and poor, noble and lowly, prince and peasant, master and servant, mistress and maid; great and small shall be cited before him in the same order, without distinction of rank, and each one shall receive the reward or punishment due to his works. Therefore, the prophet Isaias calls this day cruel: "Behold, the day of the Lord shall come, a cruel day, and full of indignation, and of wrath, and fury, to lay the land desolate, and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it" (Is. 13 : 9).

Besides, how has not the honor of Jesus Christ suffered; how does it not still suffer among men? Despised, publicly persecuted, unjustly condemned, he was seen hanging on a disgraceful cross in the presence of a multitude. The Jews still look on him as a blasphemous impostor, who was justly sentenced by their forefathers on account of his crimes, and nailed to a cross; infidels refuse to acknowledge him as their God; and how many wicked, proud, and tepid Catholic Christians are there not who are ashamed of him and of his humble Gospel? Who hardly deign to bend the knee before his altar in the public churches where he is exposed for adoration? "He," says St. Augustine, "who has been unjustly judged shall one day judge the world in justice." For the same reason he has selected the valley of Josaphat as the scene of his judgment; for that place is in the neighborhood of the scene of Jesus' sufferings for the salvation of the world. There men have seen him in the extremity of torment and degradation; and in the same place he must be seen in the height of honor and glory. Then shall all peoples

and nations adore him whom before they either did not know, or did not wish to know, or, having known him, did not honor as they should have done. "Every knee shall bow to me," in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, "and every tongue shall confess to God" (Rom. 14 : 11). There we have the first just reason why there should be a general judgment appointed for the whole world; namely, that restitution of his injured honor may be made publicly to our God and Saviour. "The Lord alone shall be exalted in that day." And at the same time he will publicly justify his admirable providence with which he governs the world.

II. Nothing is more incomprehensible to us mortals than the manner in which God acts with us in this world; and again, there is nothing that gives rise to more complaints, doubts, murmuring, nay, even blasphemies, not merely amongst heathens and heretics, but Catholics, too, than the wonderful inscrutability of the divine decrees. This very circumstance is the cause of there being so many atheists in the world, who think and say that there is no God, or that, if there be one, he takes no concern about the affairs of mortals; he allows things to go as they please; he permits the crooked to appear straight; everything in the world happens according to the free will of men; wind and weather, heat and cold, rain and sunshine, peace and war, happiness and misery, health and sickness, a short or a long life—all these things are the result of chance, or else of the action or wickedness of men. It is true that many things are ordained that seem quite irregular and unjust according to our ignorant views, so that it appears impossible that they should come from a God of infinite wisdom, justice, mercy and love.

We see and learn by daily experience that, for instance, a young, clever, and learned man dies prematurely, although his life would have been useful and necessary; while on the other hand an old, worn-out man continues to live, although he is

good for nothing, and only a burden to himself and others. We see a father in the bloom of age and health hurried off suddenly by death from his wife and children, the latter thus becoming poor orphans who have great difficulty in finding bread enough to keep off the pangs of hunger; but another remains alive who is like a roaring lion in his home, ill-treating wife and children, drinking all their earnings, and reducing them to beggary. The poor laborer is cast down on a bed of sickness for a long time, although his work is the only means he has of procuring a livelihood; while another, who has no need to work, is kept in good health, although he makes a bad use of it for sin and vice and public scandal. One abounds in wealth and makes a wrong use of it; another is poor, who, if he had riches, would do much for the honor and glory of God. The best, dearest, and most beautiful child, the one whom the parents are most anxious to keep alive, dies; while the stupid, ugly, decrepit child remains alive, although they would readily have given him to God. Children die before Baptism, although if they had been kept alive for the space of an hour they would have been freed from original sin and have been happy in heaven; and on the other hand, a young man dies in the state of sin who, if he had been taken off at an early age, would not have been lost forever. Not a few who, having attained a high degree of perfection, fall into grievous sin and are lost eternally; while on the other hand many who have for a long time led bad lives are converted and go to heaven. We see how God chastises and punishes a man, although he allows another, who is equally deserving of punishment, to get off scot free. We see and generally experience that many sinners and wicked men enjoy prosperity, wealth and honor in the world, and live in pleasures and delights; while most of the good and pious, who try to serve God faithfully and zealously, and to fulfil his holy will in all things, spend their days in poverty, misfortune, contempt, and sorrow, overwhelmed with trials, persecuted by others, and oppressed

on all sides. Well may we exclaim with Jeremias: "Why, oh, Lord, doth the way of the wicked prosper: why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly? Thou hast planted them, and they have taken root: they prosper and bring forth fruit." Why is that? Why dost thou decree that he who serves thee truly should live in sorrow and affliction, while he who contemns and despises thee passes his life in repose, joy and pleasure? "How long, oh, Lord! shall the wicked make their boast? How long shall they utter and speak wrong things? How long shall all the workers of iniquity talk?" (Ps. 93 : 3, 4.) How long shall they exult in honors and riches? The drunken glutton sits at table clad in purple, and enjoys himself, although he is a great sinner; while the just Lazarus is poor and despised, and cannot obtain even the crumbs thrown to the dogs. Why is that so? Why is virtue laughed at and oppressed, and vice exalted and honored? Why does wickedness sit on a throne and justice lie on the bare earth? Why is this, oh, Lord?

There must be a general judgment, that the Lord God may publish and justify in the sight of heaven and earth the hidden decrees and dispositions of his providence; that he may answer the questions and complaints that arise from the ignorance or wickedness of men, who do not now understand his arrangements; that he may show each one the weighty reasons he had in acting as he has done; in a word, on that day he will cause all presumptuous blasphemers to wonder at the justice and holiness of those decrees that they looked on as unjust. He will cause all the Angels of heaven, all men on earth, all the demons in hell to cry out with David: "Thou art just, oh, Lord, and thy judgment is right" (Ps. 118 : 137). "Therefore judge not before the time, until the Lord come," before forming an opinion on what you see; wait till the coming of the Lord at the end of the world, "who both will bring to light the hidden things of

darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (1 Cor. 4 : 2).

In the beginning of the world, when God created light, he went to see and examine it: "and God saw the light, that it was good" (Gen. 1 : 4). He acted in the same manner with regard to his other works—the earth, the animals, the moon, the stars; each one he examined in particular and found it good. Why did he examine all together after he had seen each one in particular and found it good? This was an image of what he is to do at the end of the world. At first God looked at each work in particular, and then he considered all his works in general, and gave testimony that they were all very good; at the end he will show his works to men to be examined and considered. In the particular judgment, which takes place immediately after the death of each one, he will show to the soul what he did specially for it, while on the last day he will bring on the stage all the works of his Providence, and present them to men to be examined publicly, so that every one, convinced of their justice and wisdom, may confess that they are very good—that all that God has done with us from the beginning of the world is very good. Parents! you lost your beloved child by a premature death, while the decrepit one remained alive; but on that day, when you shall examine the works of God, you will confess that it is very good. Children! you have lost father or mother and have become poor orphans; and on that day you will acknowledge that this decree of the Almighty was very good. That this man is rich, that one poor; this one healthy, another sickly; one well-formed, another crippled; one held in honor, another despised; one a servant, another the master; one leads a laborious, the other an idle life. We cannot now understand this difference. But wait; wait till the works of God are all placed before your eyes on that day, then at last you shall confess that they are very good, that everything has been rightly and justly ordained, and that the world could not have been governed

better. You who, in the midst of your crosses and trials, must see the wicked prospering, and all their affairs apparently succeeding, be comforted with the thought of that day! Now, you cannot see everything; but then you will undersand all, and will say: Now I behold all the works of God, and they are very good; everything is most right and just.

And what conclusion shall we now draw from this for our instruction? It follows of itself; namely, that we must in the first place not scrutinize curiously the decrees and providence of the Almighty, much less should we murmur or complain on account of them, for we are now incapable of investigating or understanding them thoroughly; and secondly, we should always submit ourselves and all belonging to us in all circumstances to the holy will of God and his all-wise Providence, perfectly confident that whatever he does with us must be for the very best. Amen.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

PRESUMPTUOUSLY SCRUTINIZING THE DIVINE DECREES.

"*But now they are hidden from thy eyes.*"—Luke 19: 42.

It is not over the impending destruction of Jerusalem that Jesus weeps. It was the precious souls of the inhabitants that forced him to weep; for he foresaw that in spite of the frequent lights granted them, and the many mercies they had experienced, they would remain obdurate in their wickedness and be lost forever. But why so? Could not the Almighty Son of God, who is so desirous of our salvation, give to those people more powerful graces, which, as he could foresee, would enable

them to repent and be saved? No doubt he could have done so. Why, then, did he not give those graces? You must not be too curious in examining those decrees, much less should you complain of or find fault with them, but rather humbly submit to and adore them. Still there are many Christians who cannot reserve their curiosity and judgment on them till the last day; now already they begin to criticise them in thought, and to ask why does God do this or that in such a manner, and not otherwise. Nay, they even find fault with him, and say that he acts unjustly. This is evident from their frequent complaints. What have I done to God that he should punish me thus? Is it right that I should have so much to suffer—that God should permit things to take such a course? Refrain from such thoughts! Be not scandalized at the most holy works of God! What folly and presumption that you should dare to criticise and condemn God and his inscrutable decrees, the knowledge and understanding of which he has chosen to keep from all till the last day!

It is folly and presumption to examine and pronounce upon the decrees and arrangements of divine Providence; much worse to criticise or find fault with them.

What a man cannot and should not understand he should let alone; and it is folly for him to try to indulge a useless curiosity regarding such a matter, and still worse for him to presume to condemn it. What would you think, asks St. Augustine, of a man born deaf, who sees a man speaking or moving his lips, or a choir of musicians, of whom one is playing the organ with his fingers, another is blowing a horn, a third opening his mouth and singing, a fourth playing the fiddle, a fifth moving his arms and beating time; what would you think if the deaf man were to condemn those different movements and gestures of the musicians as a useless and foolish piece of nonsense, for he knows not what music is? Alexander the Great used

often to visit the celebrated painter Apelles; on one occasion, as he was discussing the subject of painting with more earnestness than usual, Apelles took him aside and whispered to him to drop the matter, lest the boys who were mixing the colors should laugh at him. His meaning was that Alexander, no matter how well he might understand the art of war, knew nothing about painting, and therefore could not talk sensibly about it.

There you have an example of the foolish presumption of those men who curiously scrutinize the wonderful works of God's Providence in this life, and try to find out why things are arranged in this or that manner, forming rash judgments about them, and finding fault with them, as if God could or should have managed better. Why is this man born amongst Turks, and that other amongst Christians? Why was the true faith introduced so late into some countries, many souls meanwhile being eternally lost, while other lands received the light much sooner? Why is a country so largely infected with heresy, and another altogether free from it? Why are so many innocent peoples harried by war, while others live in peace? Why must the descendants bear the punishment of the sins of their ancestors, although the latter got off scot free? Why is this man rich, that one poor? These curious questions and many similar ones often trouble our minds. Why has God made such arrangements? Are they quite right and just?

Oh, poor, blind, deaf, and ignorant mortal! Why do you trouble yourself about things you cannot and should not understand as yet? God has, indeed, sometimes revealed things to his special friends; thus he told Abraham of his firm determination to destroy the city of Sodom, and to make him the father of a numerous progeny. He made known to Noe his intention of punishing the world by a deluge. In the same manner God made known many things to other Prophets and Saints. But, according to the general Providence by which

the world is ruled, the divine decrees remain hidden and concealed from men. What do you know about the decrees and dispensations of God's providence? You either understand them or you do not. If you understand them, you must acknowledge that they are wise and just; but if they are beyond your intellect, as you must confess, why do you examine, condemn and criticise them? If I speak Latin to you, and you have not studied that language, you know not and cannot guess what I wish to say to you; much less should you venture to find fault with my manner of speaking; how, then, can you pretend to criticise the language of divine Providence, which is much above your comprehension? How can you think or dare to ask whether all that God has done is done well and wisely? With reason, therefore, does the Apostle reprove you: "Oh, man, who art thou that repliest against God," or darest to examine his hidden decrees? "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it: Why hast thou made me thus?" (Rom. 9 : 20.)

Did God perhaps consult you when he made his all-wise arrangements about yourself and all his creatures? It would be gross insolence and presumption for a subject to presume to investigate or to understand the reason of all the commands, prohibitions, and actions of his prince or king. You do not even tell your neighbor or fellow-citizen, your own equal, your private designs, or why you have made this or that arrangement in your household; and if he were to ask you about those things you would at once tell him to mind his own business, and remind him that you are master in your own house and can do therein what you please. Yet you are presumptuous enough to investigate the reasons which the great common Father of all has in dealing with his vast household, the world! And you expect him to disclose all his secrets to you, and to explain why he has done so and not otherwise! Remember what you are; forget not that you are a mere mortal, and ac-

knowledge humbly that the wisdom displayed by God in his works is altogether too high for you to understand it.

You cannot understand such things, and therefore you should humbly adore what is above your comprehension. "Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into things above thy ability: but the things that God hath commanded thee, think on them always, and in many of his works be not curious. For many things are shown to thee above the understanding of men. And the suspicion of them hath deceived many" (Ecclus. 3 : 22-25). A certain young man at Cordova was carrying a basket of fruit covered with a cloth; a friend met him and asked him what he had in the basket: "I should not have covered it," answered the young man, "if I had wished people to know what it was." The same answer was once given to that great friend of God, St. Anthony. He was wondering at the strange dispensations of divine Providence, and in his simplicity, and with his usual confidence in treating with God, he commenced to complain; "my good God," he said, "why dost thou permit sinners to live so long, while thou takest so soon out of the world good men, whose lives might be useful?" And he heard the following answer: "Anthony, what is it to thee? Look to thyself. These are decrees which God wishes to keep from the eyes of men, and it is not for thee to find fault with them. God would not have concealed them from thee if he had wished thee to know them."

We must in this respect humbly acknowledge and say: "I can always and with reason say that I know not the secret, and the divine decrees are hidden from me." Hence if any dispensation of Providence seems strange to me, and I begin to doubt of its justice, I cannot think anything more reasonable than: I know not the secret; I do not understand the divine decrees. And if any one asks me why God has ordained or permitted this or that; why the wicked man is rich, the good man poor and

despised; why the poor laborer has many children, the mighty prince none! I can give no better answer than to say: I know not; the decrees of God are beyond my understanding; nor do I now wish to know them, since God is not pleased that I should do so. Nor is this ignorance unbecoming even to the most learned and the wisest of men; for it is necessary to know what we can and ought to know, but it is presumption and folly to seek to find out what is beyond our ken.

The time shall come when we shall know all about them—namely, on the last day, at the end of the world when the Almighty shall publicly, in the sight of all men, angels, and demons justify the dispensations of his Providence. Now he acts like a painter; while the artist is actually engaged in his work, and the painting is yet unfinished, he does not wish any one to see it; therefore he closes his workshop, or else hangs a screen before the work, that no one may look at it. No one would dare to blame the work in the artist's workshop; but you do not hesitate to blame the Almighty in what he does in the world. Hear the warning that St. Paul gives: "Judge not before the time, until the Lord come;" wait till the work of God is completed. If many things now seem inconsistent and incomprehensible to you, remember that the work of this world is not by any means finished; there is still much to be done on it, as if it were a piece of a painting. Since you cannot and should not now understand the design of the almighty Artist, wait till the last day of the world, on which God will show in public in the valley of Josaphat the whole work of his Providence, and will allow every one to see how admirably and wisely everything has been done; then we shall all see to our great admiration what a beautiful work it is.

Let us then ascribe everything that happens in the world, sin alone excepted, to the Providence of God, and since we cannot understand his decrees submit humbly to them without further question or doubt, and resign ourselves with contented minds

to the divine will. Here we should profit by the beautiful words of St. Augustine when examining and speaking in the person of Adam of the command not to eat the forbidden fruit. He says: If the tree is good, why may I not eat of its fruit? But if it is bad, why is it in paradise? God might answer both these questions by saying: The tree is in paradise because I have chosen to place it there; but I do not wish you to eat its fruit, because I desire to have in you an obedient and not a disobedient servant. But why so? Because you are the servant and I am your Lord; this sole reason should suffice for you. It was only the hellish serpent that said cunningly and craftily: "Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?" (Gen. 3 : 1.) He should have said: Why do you not eat of this tree? Then Eve might easily have answered him: Because God has forbidden us. But the deceitful, hellish foe put the question another way: "Why hath God commanded you?"

Whenever we know that God wishes us to do something, it is not for us to ask why he so wishes it. The most powerful reason for anything is that God so wills it; God has decreed it; God has ordained it; God has done it. The highest justice is the will and ordination of God; the highest wisdom to allow one's self quietly and with confidence to be ruled in all things by his holy will and all-wise providence. Sometimes parents say to one of their children: Go to school and study; to another, stay at home and help your father at his work; to a third, come into the garden and take a walk with me. If the children are naughty they will at once commence to murmur and say: Why should I study? Why must I work, while he goes to the garden? But if they are obedient, well-reared children, as all Christian children should be, they do not hesitate a moment, but at once and willingly fulfil their parents' commands. Yes, they say, I will do whatever my father or mother wishes. In the same manner should we, as obedient children of God in all

circumstances, in all dispensations of divine Providence, think and say: Father! thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE JUSTICE OF THE DIVINE DECREES.

"*I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other.*"—Luke 18: 14.

When a man is able to declare himself free from so many vices, such as theft, injustice, adultery, to thank God in fervent prayer for benefits received, to fast, to give a tenth part of his goods to the poor, are not those praiseworthy holy works and occupations which show a man to be a pious, just servant of God? On the other hand, what is more scandalous than to see a man wallowing in all sorts of wickedness, so that he is publicly called a sinner? Yet how different was the judgment pronounced by our Lord on the two men: "I say to you this man went down into his house justified rather than the other." Who would look on such a judgment as just if he did not know it came from the infallible Truth? Truly, many things of the kind happen in the world, and if we were to dare to condemn them, we should make a grievous mistake; still worse should we err by presuming to murmur against and find fault with the hidden decrees and dispensations of divine Providence; yet that is an error into which many fall, who seem to themselves learned and clever. These over-curious people I must address in the words of St. Paul: "Oh, man, who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. 9 : 20.) Who art thou who in a spirit of curiosity darest to investigate the wonderful workings of divine Providence in

the government of the world, nay, to criticise them, murmur against them, find fault with them? Wait till the work of the great Master is completed; then there will be full opportunity of seeing it all. May we not, then, express any opinion on the decrees and dispensations of God's providence in this life? Of course we may, and that is not only allowed, but it is even our duty to do so; but:

Our judgment of them should be that everything is good, right, and just in the highest degree that divine Providence does with us and everybody in the whole world, although we cannot now understand the reason of this justice and goodness, nay, although many decrees may now appear unjust and inconsistent to our understanding.

We must always give a celebrated artist the credit of working according to rule, although we may not understand the work. When the Indians first saw a clock they were so struck with admiration that they would spend the whole day gazing at it open-mouthed; they saw the pendulum swinging to and fro, and heard the rattling of the wheels when the clock struck; sometimes it struck one, sometimes two or three, and so on. What a strange thing, thought they; there must be something hidden in it! Is it altogether natural? But the simple people, nevertheless, praised the work, and were of the opinion that great skill was required to complete it; great was their admiration of the man who could make such a wonderful machine, and if they could have got hold of him there is little doubt they would have looked on him as a kind of god.

Now, if we with good reason form such a favorable opinion of the works of man, although we do not understand them, and form that opinion simply because we trust every master in his own art, what judgment should we, must we, form of the works of divine Providence? When we consider what goes on in this world, it appears to us not otherwise than as a mighty clock, in

which there are many different wheels—some large, others small; some turn here, others there; that is, one man has a wide sphere of action, another a very small one; one is seated on a throne in great honor, another lies on the ground, poor and neglected; one is rich, another poor; one healthy, another sick; one idle, another busy from morning till night, like the pendulum of the clock; one is prosperous and fortunate, another tried with sorrow and affliction; for one the clock strikes too soon, for another too late: many things seem to us inconsistent, many actually unjust, and most things inexplicable; we are quite bewildered at what we see around us; but let us seek out the Master who is still working at this clock and putting each part of it into its place, until it shall be completely finished at the end of the world.

God is the Master who arranges all; the almighty, most wise, and most just God, whom we have never seen, but of whom we know for certain that he cannot go wrong in anything, that he is "holy in all his works" (Ps. 144 : 13). Oh, therefore, must we think, and firmly believe that whatever this Artist begins and completes must be good and right, and as it should be, and that it could not be done better; and although we may not understand the reason of it, this one fact, God has so ordained it, should suffice to make us form that judgment. And for a still stronger reason should we form that judgment of him, since he tells us himself in Holy Writ that he is just in all his decrees and works, and has, as it were, promised us that on that day, when all his works shall be fully completed, we shall praise and approve of them. Again, therefore, this one fact should suffice for us, although we see before our eyes things that to our weak understanding appear unjust and inconsistent; this one fact should be enough to convince us, even against our reason and the testimony of our senses, that all he does is right and just, and could not be done better. In the very same way, although in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, I imagine that I see and

smell and feel and touch nothing but bread, yet I believe firmly the contrary, and say without the least hesitation: No, it is not bread; it is the body and blood of my Lord and Saviour. I do not understand this mystery, but I believe it; it is true. Why? Because he has said it.

And how many things has not God created in the world that seem incomprehensible, nay, incredible to us? And still we must acknowledge them to be true. Who would believe, if God had not revealed it, that the whole vast mass of the universe was created and furnished by a single word! Who would believe that the sovereign, infinite God became man, was born a little child, grew up to manhood, suffered hunger and thirst, was nailed to a cross, and died? Who would believe that the bodies that we now have, which shall decay in the earth, or be reduced to ashes, or devoured by wild beasts—who would believe that they shall be restored again to the form they now have and be again endowed with life? Any one would say of these and similar mysteries before they actually occur, or are revealed by God, that they are simply impossible, they cannot be; and yet we now say and acknowledge that they have happened and shall happen; God has done as he has said, and will do so again, for nothing is impossible to him.

Consider the beginning and progress of our religion. What a wonderful, incomprehensible thing it is! Who would ever have thought that twelve poor, ignorant fishermen, such as the Apostles were before their conversion, should be able to change the whole world, and to convince kings, emperors and philosophers that they had been living in abominable errors, that their gods, to whom most magnificent temples had been erected almost everywhere over the world, were only instruments and tools of the devils? Who would believe that they should be able to persuade the Jews that the religion which they had received from their holy leader Moses, and which was revealed to him by God, was only a figure of ours, and was now of no more

value? Who would believe that they should be able to persuade the nations of the world to abjure idolatry, and acknowledge and adore as the true God a poor man who was crucified as a criminal, to love him above all things with their whole hearts, and for his sake to suffer all the torments that could be inflicted on them, and a thousand deaths, if it were possible? Yet those poor fishermen succeeded in doing all this, without as much as a staff in their hands, and that, too, they did although they were beaten out of one city into another, while all those who accepted their teachings and obeyed the law preached by them were tortured in the most frightful manner and put to death by tyrants. Who could have believed such a thing possible before it actually took place? If I were to say to you: The great city of Rome or Constantinople shall in a short time be plundered and destroyed by twelve flies, who would credit my words? Certainly not one of you, my dear brethren. For my part, I could not believe such a thing. And is it more incredible than that twelve ignorant men should change the world in such a manner? And yet they did so; no Christian can deny it; God has said it; God has carried his words into effect.

For whenever God does anything we must look, not at the apparent possibility or credibility of the matter, but at the unlimited power of the Almighty, to whom nothing is impossible, although we may not be capable of seeing how the thing is done. Now, if we hold everything as true that God has done and said, because he is almighty and infallible, although we may not understand what he has done, why should we not also look on whatever divine Providence effects in the world as just and right, although we sometimes cannot see how things can be just or right? For God is not less holy and just than powerful, and he has said, too, that all his decrees are right and just. If the infinite power of God can produce effects that surprise our understanding, why should not divine Providence also ordain

things that we cannot explain, nay, that seem to us inconsistent? If we poor mortals could grasp the works and decrees of God, he would not be a wonderful, incomprehensible God. But why do I speak of the works and decrees of God? How many acts and plans of men do we not condemn as foolish, inconsistent and wicked, because we do not understand the motive of them, while if we happen to have them properly explained to us afterwards we see that they were reasonably sensible and holy?

But if we are ignorant of the causes and reasons of many decrees and arrangements of divine Providence, is that a reason for looking on them as unjust? Do they not proceed from the same infinitely good, wise, holy and just God? Ah, let the Author and Cause, God, suffice me in place of all reasons. Let a man speculate as much as he likes; let him ask me what questions he pleases; why God, who is so good and holy, allows so much evil to exist in the world; why God, who has suffered the death of the cross for us men, should condemn so many millions of souls to hell; why there are so many millions of infidels, heathens, idolaters, Turks, Jews and heretics to whom the mysteries of our faith have never been preached; why, generally speaking, the innocent must suffer, while the wicked prosper; why potentates are allowed by God to wage war on each other so often, to the great detriment of harmless people, who have not given the slightest cause for war and are thereby reduced to poverty; let him ask me these and a hundred similar questions, and my only answer shall be: "Let the Author and Cause, God, suffice to me in place of all reasons." God has decreed it; God permits it; God has ordained it; therefore all is permitted or decreed with the utmost justice, goodness, and holiness. Amen.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

ANOTHER REASON FOR THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

"He hath done all things well."—Mark 7 : 37.

This praise shall be given to Almighty God by all the Angels and men on the day of general judgment, when he, in the sight of the whole world, shall avenge his injured honor and justify the ordinances of his Providence, which now appear to us in many cases incomprehensible, nay, often inconsistent and unjust. Since we cannot understand these decrees, and shall not understand them till the last day, we should not pry into them curiously, and much less blame or find fault with them, but rather, as we know that they proceed from a God of infinite goodness, justice and holiness, look on them as right, just and holy. Hence in all cases we should be completely and quietly resigned to the divine will. There we have the first reason on the part of God which renders a general judgment necessary. There is still another reason that regards us men, and especially the elect, which I now intend to explain.

There must be a day of general judgment, that God may publicly, before heaven and earth, justify and defend his chosen servants.

That pious and virtuous servants of God are, during their lives, not appreciated nor honored, but, generally speaking, despised and persecuted unjustly, comes from three causes. The first is their own humility, which impels them to hide their virtue from the world; the second is the wickedness of sinful men, who, by rash judgments, uncharitable talk and persecution, try

to vilify their good works; the third is the false maxims and judgments of vain worldlings, who ridicule and laugh at true virtue and piety as folly. It is then just that there should be a day of general judgment, on which God shall defend his servants against these two latter classes of people, and justify their virtue, and make known to heaven and earth the holiness that their humility kept hidden.

1. True piety and virtue have this property and inclination, that they are always anxious to remain hidden from the eyes of men, and to creep out of the light into the darkness. To wish to be looked on as pious, and therefore to make one's good works public, and to speak and act in a boastful manner, is hypocrisy and affected piety, of which true goodness, which is founded on humility and self-contempt, knows nothing. Hence Saints chose to live in solitude, and made their dwellings in deserts and in caves in the wilderness; and they were wont to go from one country to another, that they might remain unknown and hidden from the eyes of men; for the same reason many of them concealed their noble descent under mean clothing, their great natural gifts under continual silence, the supernatural favors conferred on them by God under the appearance of a childish simplicity, nay, sometimes they actually pretended to be mad and out of their senses.

How many there are of both sexes whose holiness is buried from the light! How many chosen souls there are in religious houses, nay, even in the world, whose great virtue is utterly unknown, because they conceal it so effectually! How many decent poor suffer the privations of their state with the utmost patience for God's sake! How many a workman offers up his daily toil to God with a pure intention! How many a lowly servant maid spends her life in the meanest occupations, and her holiness, patience, and resignation to the divine will are known only to the all-seeing eye of God! How many tears of repentance and divine charity are shed in private houses in the

secrecy of the bedchamber! How much is given and taken in charity without the generous donor's name ever coming to light! It seems to me quite true that there are souls in heaven greater in holiness and higher in glory than many others who have been canonized by the Church and whose relics are honored by the world; and it seems equally certain to me that there are actually many souls on earth who imitate or even surpass the example of the Saints, and yet are not looked on as holy.

And must this always remain hidden, and that too from the world out of which the greater number of men shall be condemned to hell? No; it must not and cannot be so. The Lord himself says to all his servants: "Commit thy way to the Lord, and trust in him; and he will do it." What will he do? "He will bring forth thy justice as the light: and thy judgment as the noon-day" (Ps. 36 : 5, 6). For this purpose is fixed the day of general judgment on which all in heaven, on earth, and under the earth shall be summoned to the same place by the sound of the trumpet, and there, as it were, on a large public stage shall be exhibited with the utmost pomp and splendor the hitherto hidden virtues and good works of the elect. How the Angels will then wonder, as well as men and demons, at the sight of so many unknown souls! Oh, they will exclaim with one voice, "who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising?" (Cant. 6 : 9.) "Who is this that cometh up from the desert, flowing with delights, leaning upon her beloved?" (Cant. 8 : 5) by whom she is led, as it were, in triumph? Who is that soul of whom no one ever heard anything extraordinary during life?

2. Now, if justice requires this, is it not still more imperatively demanded by justice that misinterpreted, persecuted, and calumniated virtue should be defended and publicly vindicated? What is more foolhardy, and at the same time more common in the world, than the vice of calumny and detraction? To sneer at, criticise, find fault with, and misinterpret the actions

of others, and to spread false tales about one's neighbor is nowadays a privileged and public trade. Amongst all the holy servants of God there is hardly one who has not had to suffer in honor and reputation, and whose good name has not been made the butt of malice. Jesus Christ himself has not even yet redeemed his good name from the calumnies and aspersions that were cast on it by wicked Jews and envious Pharisees and Scribes during his lifetime; for at the present day he is looked on by the Jews as a seditious and treacherous man. The holy martyrs were condemned to painful deaths as disturbers of the public peace, as sorcerers and dealers in the black art; and as such they are still looked on by all heathens.

If God himself had not revealed to Daniel the wickedness of the two elders who falsely accused Susanna, that chaste matron would have been stoned by the people as a guilty adulteress. Joseph languished in prison under the charge of having attempted the chastity of his master's wife, although his only crime was that he resisted her wicked solicitations; if God had not saved him, he would have perhaps died in prison as a criminal. But, alas! how many there are who are publicly decried by a whole city, although they are as innocent as Joseph and Susanna were of the crime of which they are accused, and they never have an opportunity of regaining their good name! And how many are not deprived of their employment, their property, their honor, through ill-founded suspicion, or envious and false accusations, that they never have a chance of refuting? There are few who have not to suffer from the evil tongues of those who envy and hate them and try to blacken their good name behind their backs in all sorts of ways. Nearly every one measures others by his own passions and imagination; the words that are spoken are misinterpreted and taken in an evil sense.

Here again we see how necessary it is that there should be a time in which all these calumnies and falsehoods shall be re-

futed, and that too publicly, so that all those innocent and injured servants of God may recover their lost honor before the world, and the frightful perversion of truth resulting from wicked tongues be put to rights. The great day is to come when a complete change shall be made. The time shall come when Christ shall assemble before him all nations, and divide them, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And that is the last day of the world, when the trumpet shall summon the dead from their graves to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ in the valley of Josaphat. And how great shall then be the glory of the elect, when they see themselves justified from the calumnies they suffered so patiently on earth, while their persecutors are put to shame in the sight of the whole world! What joy there will then be on that day for the pious, when their holiness and virtue are made manifest to all, and when they see what treasures of merit they gained by their patient silence, and how their good name and honor are amply restored to them!

3. Finally, there must and shall be a day of general judgment in order to defend and uphold the lives of the just and pious against the erroneous opinions and judgments of vain worldlings. If we contrast the laws and maxims of the Gospel of Christ with the lives and conduct of most Christians, what a discord we shall find between them! It will seem as if our Lord had preached mere fables to us, or at least as if his truths are not necessary to be practised by Christians who wish to go to heaven. The Gospel blesses the poor in spirit, but threatens woe to the rich who seek their pleasure and consolation in earthly goods; it says that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man, whose heart and desires are attached to temporal things, to enter heaven; it blesses the meek and the peaceful, who give way in silence to their opponents, and repay injuries with prayers and benefits, according to the law which says you must love your enemies

and do good to those that hate and persecute and calumniate you; you must refrain from taking revenge under pain of eternal damnation; he who does not pardon his enemy cannot expect pardon from God. It blesses those who weep and mourn here, and are tried by all kinds of crosses and tribulations, provided they bear them with patience and resignation to the divine will, while it threatens woe and eternal gnashing of teeth to those who laugh here and lead a voluptuous life. It blesses those who hunger and thirst after justice, while it threatens the tepid and slothful in the service of God, and warns them that God will vomit them out of his mouth. It blesses those who suffer persecution for justice's sake, and are despised and looked down on by others, while it menaces eternal curses to those who are addicted here to cursing. It raises up to heaven the humble, who seek the lowest places here, while it says to the proud that unless they change and become as little children they shall never enter the kingdom of heaven, but it holds out no hope of heaven to the voluptuous, to gluttons, and drunkards. It condemns the friends of the world as enemies of God. It points out the rugged way and the narrow gate that lead to heaven; it tells us that we must use violence in order to get there, and warns us against the broad road that leads to eternal damnation. It gives laws and rules to parents, showing them how carefully they should bring up their children for heaven; to children, telling them how to obey and honor their parents; to wives, warning them that they should seek to please their husbands alone with humility and obedience; to husbands, telling them to love their wives.

4. Now, we are all Catholic Christians; we cannot deny the Gospel of Christ; we cannot convict the word of God of falsehood or deceit; but how many are there who are fully persuaded that they are bound to live according to those laws and truths, and to regulate their actions most exactly in conformity with them? Pious servants of God, desirous of salvation, show

a ready obedience to those laws and try their best to observe them. But what do the vain children of the world say to them? Oh, they have a far different idea of things! "The sensual man," says St. Paul with reason, "perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand" (1 Cor. 2 : 14). The proud ridicule those laws and truths; dissolute and sensual men disregard them, and try to fashion a Gospel to suit themselves; they who live according to the corrupt world look on the pious who follow Christ and his law, and despise the world and its customs, as fanatics; they have a secret pity for what they imagine to be simplicity, for humility and modesty: "The simplicity of the just man is laughed to scorn" (Job 12 : 4), says holy Job to his false friends. St. Gregory, commenting on this text, uses the following beautiful words: "The wisdom of this world is to hide by deceit the sentiments of the heart; to speak otherwise than one thinks; to prove true what is false, and false what is true; to turn the mantle with the wind; to agree with every one; to seek one's own interests always; to strive for honors and high places; to tolerate no injury; to return evil for evil, and if one cannot be revenged on one's adversary, to conceal one's hatred and anger by an appearance of politeness; to gratify one's sensuality and love of comfort; to conform to the usages of other men, and to take the world as a guide in all things. This wisdom is imbibed by the young with their mother's milk; they are trained in it during their youth; they who are skilled therein despise others; they who are ignorant of it look up to those who know it with the most profound and reverent admiration."

When shall these clouds of darkness be blown away? When shall the truth be disclosed to show which side is right? Jesus Christ himself, accompanied by all his Angels, shall descend on that day from heaven, and in the presence of all the nations of the world shall erect the standard of the cross and then pronounce sentence according to the laws of the Gospel on all

those who have rejected those laws. The whole world will then have to confess and acknowledge that God revealed to the simple-minded and lowly, as they were imagined to be, what he kept concealed from the wise and powerful. Then the foolish children of the world shall see, when too late, the grievous error into which they fell, and humbled and filled with shame and confusion, disgraced and outcast, they will stand there crying out in rage and despair those words of the Book of Wisdom: "Therefore we have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us" (Wisd. 5 : 6). So in spite of all our cleverness, we are now found wanting; we have not known the very fundamental truths of the Christian doctrine! "We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honor" (Wisd. 5 : 4). Now we foolish ones see in the glory of the chosen children of God those whom we looked on as simple and stupid, while we have to go with the demons into eternal darkness! Amen.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE SUFFICIENT THOUGH UNEQUAL GRACES FOR SALVATION THAT ARE GIVEN TO ALL MEN.

"*What must I do to possess eternal life?*"—Luke 10: 25.

This question should touch the hearts of all men, because all, without exception, are created for eternal life. A short answer embracing the whole divine law was given to the question: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." This again holds good

for all men, not one excepted; all must love their God with their whole heart and their neighbor as themselves; for such is the will of God. And all can love God and their neighbor, for no one is without the graces and helps which the divine generosity has prepared for all in abundance. Yet, there are people who indulge in curious thoughts and speculations regarding this truth, and doubt whether the goodness of God reaches in this sense to all men; thus they represent the divine goodness and liberality as not so great or lovable as is becoming. Against these I shall in this sermon defend the honor and glory of the general love and mercy of God. From the many doubts that might assail us on this point I select only two, to which nearly all the others may be reduced.

I. Not all men seem to have frequent graces to gain heaven.
II. Not all men have equal helps to gain heaven.

I. If storks, swallows and other birds know instinctively how to find their way, although no one has taught them, across the high seas into those warm countries where they remain during the winter, and are able to return again at the beginning of spring; if the bees without a master are able to find the flowers from which they suck the honey; if stags, bears, dogs, cats, and almost all other animals can find without a master healing herbs when they are sick, to restore themselves to health; if the rivers can find the sea, and all the elements their centre and point of rest, to which without any guide they are borne of themselves and by a natural inclination, and in which they finally repose: who can believe that there should be so many men on earth who know nothing of God, or of their last end, or of the means by which they may attain it? If no country is so remote, so wild and barbarous as not to receive the benefit of the sun, the stars, the winds, rains, and other things that are necessary for the preservation of the life of the body, who can believe that the means of saving the everlasting life of the im-

mortal soul should alone be wanting to it? If all men, even in the wilds of heathendom, have their guardian Angels at their side, to protect, guide, and keep them, who can believe that these Angels do not, according to their office, give the souls entrusted to them the inspirations necessary for their salvation? If Jesus Christ suffered and died for the salvation of all men, who can believe that he will not also give to all that without which his blood and life would be sacrificed in vain? If God earnestly desires the eternal happiness of all men, and does not wish that any one should be lost, who can believe that he will not give them all the means, and even extraordinary ones, in a way known only to himself, without which they could not work out their salvation, but must be lost forever? No; there is no doubt of it; even the most savage nations, hitherto unknown to the rest of the world, if there are such, have means enough to know their God, to love their God, to keep the law of their God, to attain to the light of the true faith, and thus, if they wish, to gain heaven.

How so? In what manner? No one is so stupid, so ignorant, and rude as not to know, when he sees a beautiful, well-built, magnificent house, that there must have been a master who built it. There is no one who hears from afar the delightful harmony of many voices and musical instruments, who does not think that there must be some one who is the author of that music. There is no one who sees a body move itself, walk, stand, speak, eat, drink, who does not know that such a body has a soul and life in it. Yet he has not seen the soul, the musician, or the architect with his bodily eyes, nor has any one told him about them. Thus we must hold it as certain that there is no man that has come to the use of reason, even if he were quite alone wandering about in a wilderness, who when he beholds the earth, the sky, and himself, does not arrive at the knowledge that there is a sovereign Lord and Master who has made this beautiful world, and governs it in its wonderful

order and constant regularity, although he has not been told anything of this master; and this knowledge is enough with the sole light of reason to move and impel him to acknowledge that this sovereign Lord and Ruler should be honored, feared, and loved. Hence the question whether an inculpable ignorance of God is possible in a reasoning man is answered by nearly all theologians as follows: Such ignorance in one who has arrived at the use of reason cannot exist, at least for any length of time; for every one is brought to the knowledge of the Creator by the consideration of created things; and if the Supreme Being is not known by the name of God, yet he has some other title which inspires reverence, and suggests that obedience and submission are due to him.

Besides this knowledge of God, and the obligation of honoring, loving, and praying to him that is learned from creatures, reason itself teaches almost all the other commandments of God that are now prescribed, and how they should be kept. For just as the first principle of nature tells us that we must preserve our lives as long as we can, and every one, without further reasoning or teaching, at once understands and acknowledges that he must eat, drink, sleep, defend himself when attacked: so there is no reasoning being who does not at once recognize that first fundamental law impressed on us by nature itself: "Do unto others as you would wish them to do to you;" he knows that he must honor his parents, do no wrong to any one, inflict pain on no one without just cause, slay no one unless he is forced to do it, rob no one. And he who does any of those bad things, although he is quite alone and has no one on earth to fear, although he knows nothing of any express command, yet he will at once feel the biting tooth of remorse, and a secret fear that says to his heart he has done wrong; thus he knows he must avoid such actions. Hence there is no one ignorant of God and of his general law.

There are several wonderful mysteries that are far above our

grasp; and yet they are in themselves infallibly true. For instance, we do not understand how it is that the sea ebbs and flows at different times, yet it is an undoubted fact that such is the case. We do not know and cannot see how and in what manner God speaks to the hearts of the wildest heathens, and gives them his light and copious graces, but we shall know all about it on that day when the Lord will disclose the most hidden things, and reveal before all men the secrets of hearts. Then we shall find that to be true which our Lord foretells: "Many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 8 : 11). Then we shall see what St. John saw long ago, as we read in the Apocalypse: "A great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne" (Apoc. 7 : 9). Hence there is no nation in the world so wild and uncultivated that many of its people shall not gain heaven, and hence there is none that the good God does not richly provide with the means of salvation.

II. But if God wills the salvation of all men, why does he not give to all equally powerful means of salvation, that they may all save their souls with the same facility? It is certain, no matter how we consider the matter, that we Catholics have far more light and knowledge, and more convenient means and opportunities of doing good and gaining heaven easily, than those wild people who live in heathenism and infidelity, and Turks and heretics who do not live among Catholics. And even among Catholics it is again certain that God gives some more, others fewer graces, so that the former conquer their passions with ease, and the latter only with great difficulty, in order to gain heaven. Further, it is probable that if many who are now in hell had such great graces as many of the Saints received, they would also have become holy and be now in

heaven; whence that difference? "O man! who art thou that repliest against God?" (Rom. 9 : 20.) Poor mortal, how can you dare to scrutinize the hidden decrees of the Almighty, and to ask your God why he does this or that, and acts in this or that way, and not otherwise? Is it not enough for you that he has given you his graces and helps in abundance, so that, if you will, you can gain his eternal kingdom? What is it to you that he has given more or less to others? "Take what is thine and go thy way;" I do you no wrong; "or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil because I am good?" (Matt. 20 : 14, 15.)

Let us imagine that a rich king publishes that whosoever comes to his palace on a certain day shall receive a thousand dollars, and he has fixed on a day to suit all, even those who live at the greatest distance. To some he sends a coach to convey them to his court, to others a horse, that they may ride thither; for others who live by the sea he sends boats, and for others who are strong enough he sends only a guide to show them the way. Now if those latter wished to complain and say: why must I walk while those others ride? I should also like to sit in a coach and thus travel more comfortably. Why must I weary myself journeying on foot? The king might say to him: Who asked you to come at all? I am so good as to offer you a thousand dollars that I do not owe you; if you do not want it, stay at home! But if I give others a more comfortable way of coming for the money, I do you no wrong, and show you no disfavor; it should suffice for you that you may have all that money, if you only wish to come and take it. There is what the King of heaven does with us. He calls and invites all men to his kingdom, there to possess a treasure of delights, if they only wish to come for it. Those who have received greater graces travel, as we imagine, in a coach to heaven; others, who have received fewer graces, as we believe—although we cannot be certain of that—have greater difficulty in making the journey, and must go on

foot. Supposing such to be the case, why has God so ordained? Why have some more graces than others? But that is not the question we should ask. We should rather inquire: Why do I not use the graces that the Lord has given me for my salvation?

Yet, to throw a little light on this matter, I say that this difference of graces is most justly ordained by God. Every creature is a copy of the divine perfections; but, as no one creature can in itself represent all those perfections, which are infinite, the wisdom of Providence has decreed that there should be a difference between creaturs, so that the one may represent what the other does not. Among so many millions of men you will hardly find two who resemble each other in all respects; each one has something to distinguish him in color, face, or manner. Therefore God has appointed different states and modes of life for men; one must be rich, the other poor; one is married, the other single; one is a priest, another a man of the world, another a servant. And this distinction of classes is necessary for the preservation of the world. The same order must be observed in the distribution of graces and supernatural goods, which are dispensed in different ways according to the states and conditions of men. The Religious has one grace, the layman another; the poor man has a different grace from the rich man; but all this is so admirably arranged that the grace given to each one is that which is best suited to his condition to enable him to work out his salvation with more ease. If I reject the grace given me by God, and refuse to make use of it for my salvation, although I can easily profit by it, then I cannot blame God, but he can blame me.

"Thou art just, oh, Lord, and thy judgment is right" (Ps. 118 : 137). No one can find fault with God, no one complain that he is parsimonious; all of us have graces and means enough, graces and means in abundance to work out our salvation. And woe to us if we Catholics do not come to God in heaven! What

a hell will be ours! If even heathens and barbarians living in the remotest islands cannot with reason complain that they are abandoned by God and his grace, if they must ascribe their damnation to themselves alone: what excuse shall we have if we do not profit by the copious and frequent graces given for our salvation? Woe to us if many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while we, the children of the kingdom, are cast out into exterior darkness! if many heathens who have, with the sole light of reason, lived better according to God's commandments than we, shall be our judges and condemn us! This consideration should in future urge you to greater compunction of heart and detestation of your past sins, and to more zeal and constancy in the service of God; so that after having, at least during the remainder of your life, worked faithfully with God's graces and helps, at the end you may be able to think and say with St. Paul: "By the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace in me hath not been void." Amen.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE GAINING AN INCREASE OF HEAVENLY GLORY IN THIS LIFE.

"*And it came to pass, as they went they were made clean.*"
—Luke 17: 14.

Why did Jesus send those ten lepers to the priests? To show that he does not always wish to dispense his graces and gifts immediately, but that, in order to receive them, we must do our part of the work. God might of himself alone free us from our past sins, but he does not do so in the present arrangements of

his Providence, since we must contribute our share, too—namely, repenting of our sins and confessing them to the priest. God could of himself alone make us eternally happy, but he does not wish to do so, since we have to work with him and, by diligently practising virtue, gain heaven as a reward. That is a circumstance that should cause us to rejoice, for thus by our own efforts we may ascend higher in heaven, and by our work here on earth make our future glory there all the greater. This consideration should encourage us to practise good works daily and without giving way to weariness, for we can say to ourselves: Heaven, everlasting joy and glory, could any labor or trouble be too much for me to possess and increase you! To the end that we may have thoughts of the kind always ready to arise in our minds, I shall make the glory of heaven the subject of our instruction, not considering that glory as it is in itself, but how it can be constantly and indeed easily increased during this life, if we only wish to do so.

I. We can always add to our future glory in heaven;

II. In what consists this increase of the glory of one blessed soul above another.

I. The substance and essence of perfect happiness and of the eternal glory that is prepared for us in heaven consists properly in the perfect possession and enjoyment of the supreme Good through the beatific vision, and the perfect love of God and peaceful joy in God that spring from this vision. This glory is essentially the same with all the elect in heaven; for they all see their God clearly, all love him with their whole hearts, all rejoice in him eternally, and thus all are happy together in the perfect possession and enjoyment of the supreme Good.

Meanwhile St. Paul says: "One is the glory of the sun, another the glory of the moon, and another the glory of the stars. For star differeth from star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15 : 41, 42). That is, just as one star

differs from another in brilliancy, so in the resurrection of the dead the elect shall differ from each other in glory; so that, although they shall all see God, yet it shall not be in the same manner, but one shall behold and possess him more, another less, and in that way one shall have more glory than the other. The reason of this is because glory shall be measured out according to the degree of merit and the sanctifying grace accumulated by merit, and on that scale it shall be apportioned out and appropriated to each one for eternity. Now, as the merits and sanctifying grace of the living on earth are greater or less, so also must the reward and glory of the blessed in heaven who have attained their end be different. Who can doubt that the glory of Mary, the Mother of God, is incomparably greater than that of any of the Seraphim or any other saint? That the glory of St. Peter or St. Paul far excels that of the newly-baptized infant who died in its cradle after having received the Sacrament of Baptism? But this diversity does not occasion the least dissatisfaction among the elect, because in the state of perfect happiness there is no room for envy or sadness, since all love each other perfectly and rejoice in each other's happiness just as they do in their own; and that because each one knows that a higher degree of glory than he enjoys would not be suitable or becoming for him; therefore each one is quite content with his state.

From this it follows that, as each one can add more and more to his merits on earth daily, hourly, nay, every moment, by sanctifying grace, so also can he increase more and more his future glory in heaven and add to it almost infinitely. Degrees and dignities in heaven are on a far different footing from those on earth. In heaven the ladder is endless in length; no matter how high you may go, you will never come to the last round, so that you shall be able to say: Now I am at the top, and cannot go higher. No; the good we shall possess in heaven is the infinite God, an uncreated, immense, fathomless ocean of all

imaginable delights and joys; no matter how deep you drink of it there will always remain more and more delights that can be enjoyed by a greater light of glory. What an immense, indescribable good is such an increase! The least degree of heavenly glory, such as that apportioned to a child who dies just after Baptism, is an immensely greater and more precious good than all possible goods of the whole world, even if God were to create millions of new worlds, and fill them with all sorts of delights; so that, if the choice were given me between the supreme authority of all these worlds, with all the power, dignity, wealth and pleasure that can be imagined in order to enable me to fill such a position, for not a hundred but a thousand millions of years in perfect peace, without trouble or annoyance of any kind; if I had to choose between this and the very lowest degree of glory in heaven, then without the least hesitation, if I acted rightly, I should take that lowest degree in preference to all this authority and prosperity on earth. The reason of this is evident: countless worlds with all their goods are, after all, only natural and finite things, but the good that is possessed and enjoyed in heavenly glory is the infinite God himself. Now, if the lowest degree of glory is so valuable, what shall we say of twenty, a hundred, a thousand, of millions of degrees of greater and greater glory in heaven, which any one as long as he lives may work for and attain by the grace of God? Who can, then, understand or grasp the immensity of that good which consists in the increase of merit on earth and of eternal glory in heaven?

Although the heavenly citizens are incessantly occupied in acts of the most ardent love of God, they shall never on that account ascend a finger's breadth higher in heaven for all eternity, because death has deprived them of all power of meriting. But we, as long as we are on the way to eternity —that is, while we are in this mortal life—have the power and opportunity by fervor in doing good, and by patiently bearing adversity, of adding every moment a new degree to our future eternal reward. Oh,

priceless time of grace! that we blind mortals so often misspend in idleness, and sleep, and frivolity, although we might gain endless treasures by it! Oh, deplorable state of sin! in which most men are for weeks, months, and years without doing penance, and meanwhile, since they have not sanctifying grace, they are not able, even by works that are in themselves most holy, to add the least iota to the goods of heaven! How careful, diligent, and thrifty we are when there is a question of making a few shillings and increasing our temporal wealth! Should we not employ at least the same amount of energy in adding to our eternal glory in heaven? But in what does this increase of glory properly consist which distinguishes one saint from another?

II. A higher degree of glory in heaven consists in a clearer vision of God.

1. Each and every one of the blessed beholds the face of God and the full plenitude of the divine essence; yet one sees this far more clearly and perfectly than another, according as the greater or less degree of his merits affords him a greater or less light. Just as on earth any eye, even that of an ignorant person, can see the firmament and remark its size and roundness, its stars and clouds; but the astronomer with his glass can have a far clearer and more extended view of it. Any mind can grasp a truth along with is fundamental reason, but a cultivated mind will see it far clearer than an ignorant and unlearned one. Thus, speaking with due proportion of the blessed in heaven, it is also with the beatific vision, according to the greater or less amount of light that accompanies it.

2. From this clearer vision and knowledge of God comes another advantage: the blest soul who enjoys it is more like to God in beauty and knowledge. So great is the power of the sovereign Good that it absorbs and, as it were, transforms into itself him who beholds it in glory. So speaks St. Paul: "But

we all beholding the glory of the Lord with open face are transfromed into the same image" (2 Cor. 3 : 18). "We know," says St. John, "that when he shall appear we shall be like to him: because we shall see him as he is" (1 John 2 : 3). Now, if that transformation and likeness to God takes place even in the least of the elect because he sees God, how much more perfect will it not be in one of the greater Saints, who see him much clearer and have his likeness more deeply impressed on them? Oh, mortals! who are sometimes so bewitched by a perishable beauty that your whole heart is ensnared by it, ah! raise the eyes of your mind to the beauties of heaven, and rejoice that you are furnished with ways and means of attaining even to their utmost perfection, if you only will.

3. Or perhaps you are ambitious and strive for a high place among men? Then again raise up your eyes and your honor-craving heart to the kingdom of heaven, and behold there the third advantage, the indescribable honor to which he shall be raised in the city of God, before the whole court of heaven, who by the greater amount of merit accumulated in this life has prepared for himself a higher degree of glory, and a place so much nearer to the throne of the divine majesty. Oh, what an honor to have the preference for all eternity in the kingdom of God! Here on earth we see how the Saints are honored in all Christendom by churches built to their memory, and splendid altars, and magnificent statues, and by all sorts of offerings, vows, prayers, and hymns; we see how princes and kings bend the knee before their relics and humbly beseech their intercession; but what must it be in heaven, where their dignity and holiness are far better understood and appreciated and more fervently loved? It is a great honor to be held in esteem by many men, by men of understanding and learning, and especially by great men; and the greater the number of those who show the honor, the more is the honor itself increased and prized. What, then, must be the exceeding great and unspeakable honor of the saint

who is raised above others in heaven? for he is admired, prized, loved, praised, esteemed by a countless multitude of the wisest, noblest, most mighty of the elect of God. Ah, vain children of the world, why do you run so foolishly after a petty, empty honor that exists only in the false ideas of men? Why do you go to such trouble to beg for a worthless title, a nod of the head, a rank that seems to place you a finger's breadth higher than others in the social scale? "Oh, ye sons of men!....why do you love vanity and seek after lying?" (Ps. 4 : 3.) Do you really wish to gratify your ambition? Then you have a most glorious opportunity of so doing; it is in your power, by increasing your merits daily, hourly, and every moment, to raise yourselves higher and higher in true honor in heaven. But, alas! who thinks of this?

4. Lastly, the difference of glory in heaven consists in the greater happiness one saint shall have above another in the eternal possession of God. For just as in hell, although all the damned lie in the same fire, yet their torments are different according to the debts they have incurred and sins committed, so the blessed in heaven shall share its joys and delights according to the measure of their merits, although they shall all see the same God. Of the blessed in general David says: "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure" (Ps. 35 : 9); so that they shall swim, as it were, in an ocean of delights and pleasures. Now, if there is such an inundation of joy in the vision and love of God, even in the case of those blessed souls who have brought only one degree of sanctifying grace, received in the Sacrament of Baptism, with them out of this life into eternity, how immense must not be the eternal joys of a saint who is higher in bliss, who kept on increasing sanctifying grace and thereby everlasting glory in heaven every hour, nay, every moment sometimes, for twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy,

eighty years, during which time he lived in the state of grace on earth?

So it depends on ourselves, then, if we only choose, to make the eternal joys of heaven always greater and greater for ourselves? Should one not be willing to toil and labor incessantly for that object? But, oh, fools that we are, and forgetful of our own interests! hitherto our chief care and labor have been devoted to temporal things that cannot be of any use to us in eternity, while that infinite good has had but little place in our thoughts! But in future we shall know how to look after our interests better; no minute of the precious time that still remains to us shall go by without merit, that we may always raise our throne in heaven higher and nearer to the throne of God, so that we may behold our God all the more clearly, love him all the more perfectly, and rejoice in him all the more. Amen.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE EASY MEANS THAT WE MAY USE TO INCREASE OUR GLORY IN HEAVEN.

"*Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God.*"—Matt. 6 33.

Weighed down by incessant cares during your lives, you trouble yourselves only about what you shall have to eat and drink, and wherewith you shall be clothed, how you are to heap up wealth and riches, or to gain honor among men, or to secure your bodily comforts and gratify your senses. How vain is your labor! It has nothing to do with what we are sent on earth to seek. Quite different is the end that God had in view

when he created us. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God;" it is an eternal gratification of body and soul, an eternal crown of honor, eternal joys and delights in the kingdom of God, that we should alone strive for with all our might; and this, too, we can if we are in the state of grace and wish to do so; this we can gain and increase, and in fact gain and increase with ease. Ah, where is our ambition? where our desire for true joys if we take no care of this? "Seek ye first the kingdom of God." We can always add to our heavenly honor, wealth, and happiness in the kingdom of God. Let us now consider how wonderfully easy God has made this increase of merits, and consequently of eternal glory.

Wonderfully easy has God made the means of increasing sanctifying grace here, and eternal glory hereafter.

God does not require anything very great or extraordinary of us to gain heaven, but accepts our daily—and even in themselves trivial—acts as meritorious of glory. With what easy means he has supplied us to enable us to add to our eternal joys in heaven; for

1. In the first place, he reckons as meritorious of sanctifying grace, and consequently of everlasting glory, each and every good work we do, not merely those that are very perfect, but even the ordinary, in themselves trivial and even seemingly useless works we perform, provided only we are in the state of grace and do these works for God's sake with a good intention. Now, although all good works are not equally meritorious, but one merits more than another according as it is in itself more perfect, or difficult, or performed with greater zeal, yet even the least works have their value and merit for eternal life. What can be easier than to give a piece of bread to a hungry man, to give a drink of water to the thirsty, a rag of clothing to cover the naked? Yet all this is reckoned as meritorious, and according to the measure of the merit gained will be rewarded with

endless treasures in heaven for all eternity; and our Judge, Jesus Christ himself, tells us that it is for such things that he will call the just to his kingdom on the last day. What is more commonplace, or more seemingly useless, than eating, drinking, walking, standing, sitting, working? And yet if these things are done according to the requirements of our state of life, in the grace of God, and to his honor and glory, according to the exhortation of the Apostle, they, too, will be considered meritorious of eternal glory.

2. We can see how easy God has made it for us to increase our eternal glory from the fact that our good works, according to the present disposition of Providence, merit nothing but an increase of sanctifying grace and of glory hereafter. Riches, honors, temporal prosperity, success in business, health, a long life, help and assistance in temptations and dangers of the soul, and that which is most important of all, and on which everything depends, the grace of final perseverance and a happy death: these are the goods that the Lord can and will bestow on us, but they are not goods with which our good works shall be rewarded; we may humbly pray for them, but we cannot merit them; they may be received as a free gift, but not claimed as a just recompense of merit. Why so? Are the good works we perform in the state of grace, and which are united with the merits of Jesus Christ, not worth so much as to merit those goods? Truly, they are worth it and much more. But God has determined to give them no other reward than the increase of grace here and glory hereafter; this exhausts all their merit, so that we may be able to make our eternal joys always greater and greater.

3. Thirdly, this is the very object God has in view in making the merit of our good works altogether our own property, so that it cannot be transferred to others, living or dead. He thus, as it were, places us in the same condition as little children who are under the care of a guardian, and who are indeed owners of

their property, but with such limited rights that they cannot make away with any of it lawfully. It is nearly the same with the merit of our good works. I can, for instance, by my prayers, fasting, alms-deeds, Masses, acts of mortification, obtain some blessing from God for the soul or body of some other living person, but, no matter how willing I may be to do so, I cannot give him the merit of these goods works; it is out of my power to assign that over to another; it is and remains my own property. And if I say a Mass for the souls in purgatory; if I give them, as many pious Christians do, all my good works, what do I do? I merely give away the satisfaction for the punishment due to sin, and by those very works that I thus give away I merit for myself the increase of sanctifying grace here and of eternal glory hereafter as my reward; this, although I might wish to give it away, or might imagine I have already given it, I cannot alienate from myself; it is a property, a fund that belongs to me alone as its lawful owner. "For," says the Apostle, "what things a man shall sow those also shall he reap" (Gal. 6 : 8), and no other can have any right or claim to that property.

4. Our good works continually increase in merit more and more, according to the measure of the increase and augmentation of sanctifying grace. For example: a child who has just come to the full use of reason has only the grace it received in Baptism—one single degree, let us call it. Now this child says the Lord's prayer with devotion, and thereby merits a new degree of grace here and of glory hereafter, so that it actually possesses two degrees. If it again says the Lord's prayer, it adds still more to its grace here and glory hereafter than it gained by the first recital. Why? Because the second prayer is said in a state of greater sanctifying grace than the first, and thus it comes from a soul that is more pleasing to God. The third prayer is still more meritorious than the second and first, the fourth than the third, and so the merit of good works goes on

increasing more and more till death, in proportion to the increase of grace.

5. God is not satisfied with the mere merits that we can gain by our own work and labor, that is, by our own good works; for in the institution of the holy Sacraments he has opened to us an inexhaustible living fountain of graces and merits that are given to our souls in the reception of those Sacraments, immediately through the merits of Jesus Christ, or as theologians say, "ex opere operato," and that are rewarded hereafter with eternal glory. Thus, for instance, if I am in the state of grace, and confess my sins again with true sorrow and contrition, and am again absolved from them, I merit a new degree of sanctifying grace and heavenly glory, not merely on account of my contrition and humble confession, but also through the virtue of the Sacrament, which immediately through the merits of Christ, without any work of mine so far, confers new merit on me. Of all the other Sacraments the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar has most power in this respect when one receives it worthily; partly because its proper effect is to increase sanctifying grace in the soul, partly because Jesus Christ, who comes to us, God and Man, as our Guest, for our good, acts on the occasion like a wealthy prince who, as beseems his high personality, gives away not copper money, but gold and silver, and that, too, with the utmost liberality; and that we may all the more easily enjoy his generosity he has made this Sacrament the easiest of all to be received, penance alone excepted. Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Orders can be received validly but once in a lifetime, and Extreme Unction but once during the same dangerous illness; Matrimony can be received but once, except one of the married couple dies. But the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and Penance can be repeated and received as often as we wish—every month, every week, nay, frequently during the week. What else can be the object of such a beautiful invention of the divine generosity if not to entice us to re-

ceive that Sacrament often, that we may thus drink more deeply at the living fountain of grace, enrich our souls more and more with merit, and make our future glory in heaven greater and greater?

6. Sixthly, what should be a source of great consolation for us, God has ordained that the merits which we have accumulated by our good works during life, or that have been granted us out of the treasure of Christ in the reception of the Sacraments, can never be lessened in the least by any venial sin or imperfection or fault whatever. Venial sin is an offence against God and deserves temporal punishment, but it does not take away sanctifying grace either in part or altogether, even if our small sins surpassed in number the sands on the seashore. All the sanctifying grace that we have once collected and accumulated belongs to us always, as long as we do not make God our enemy by committing mortal sin; and hence it still preserves its right, according to its measure and degree, to the eternal joys of heaven. The accounts between God and us are not regulated as they are between men; in the latter case the receipt is compared with the expenditure, the debt with the payment; thus, for instance, I have lent you twenty dollars, and you owe me twenty dollars. On the other hand, I have on a certain occasion received goods from you to the amount of ten dollars, so that that sum has to be deducted from your debt, and you owe me only ten. Again, you have in my name given six dollars to Peter; thus your debt is lessened again, and you owe me only four, and so on. This, I say, is not the way in which God reckons with us: he keeps two different books; in one he writes down the merits of our good works, for which he has bound himself to give us heaven as a reward; in the other he writes down our daily faults and venial sins, as well as the mortal sins we have repented of, for which we deserve some punishment. Neither of these books has anything to do with the other. God does not say: you have done so many good works, and therefore

I owe you such and such a reward in heaven; but you have often offended me by venial sin, and you have not yet satisfied for the mortal sins you have blotted out by repentance, so I shall strike out some of your merit and only give you so much. No, that is not the way; otherwise what would become of us poor mortals? And how would we fare in the summing up of accounts, with the repeated sins and short-comings that we are guilty of day by day? How could our sanctifying grace ever increase if it were constantly lessened? and what sort of a reward could we expect in heaven? No; he assures to us forever the whole capital of grace and merit, so that we can never lose any of it. What a consolation this should be for us! If I have to spend a thousand years, and even several thousand, if the world lasts so long, in purgatory, and to burn there till the end of the world on account of my sins and to pay my debts, I am still certain and assured that my glory in heaven is kept for me quite intact, and that I shall receive it without the least diminution according to what I have merited by my good works on earth.

Mortal sin is the only thing that robs us altogether of all our treasure of grace and merit. But even here the goodness and generosity of God have found another means of promoting our interests. How so? In this way: when a man consents to mortal sin the book in which his merits are written out is, as it were, thrown down under the desk and forgotten; the Lord God looks on that man now as an enemy, and if he dies in that state he cannot expect the least reward for all his merits throughout eternity; he is just as badly off as if he had never done a good act in his life. But when he makes a good confession or an act of perfect contrition, and thus recovers the grace and friendship of God, the book of his merits is again taken up; it still contains the record of all he gained before falling into sin, and he receives it all back again in addition to the new merit he has gained by his perfect contrition or repentance; and his subsequent good works are as meritorious as the grace

he had before his fall would have made them; nay, on account of the increase of grace gained by repentance, those works are more meritorious than any similar works he did before. We cannot speak in the same way of sin; for when it is once forgiven it does not revive again, nor is it again imputed to the sinner who relapses into grievous guilt; because God's generosity surpasses his severity, and he seeks our greater glory, but not our greater punishment. Oh, what a comfort for those who have often sinned grievously, and have truly repented and made a good confession.

7. The desire that God has to exalt us in heaven is evident from the lengthening of our lives. One man he keeps alive for twenty, another for thirty, a third for forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety years; and what is the reason of that? If he merely wished us to gain heaven as a reward, would not a short time suffice? I may, if I am in the state of grace, gain everlasting happiness by a single fervent sigh, by one act of charity. And the little infant who dies immediately after having received Baptism has an assured claim to heaven. So it is; an hour, a quarter of an hour, nay, a minute is more than enough for any one to gain heaven. Why, then, does God prolong our lives for such a lengthened period? Here again we have another invention of the divine goodness in our regard! God is not satisfied with merely having us in heaven; he wishes us to mount higher and higher, in order to enjoy ourselves all the more with himself forever.

8. While thus preserving our lives, how does God not constantly urge us to increase our merit and glory by diligently performing good works? That misfortune, sickness, poverty, death, trouble, and adversity: what else is it but a check to keep us from vice, a spur to urge us on to the fulfilment of the divine will, to humility, to penance, to prayer, and other virtuous and meritorious works? The very temptations that we suffer from the devil, by which that evil spirit seeks our ruin, are permitted

by God and ordained by him, as the Apostle says, for our greater good and profit: "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. 10 : 13). He allows us to be tempted in order to purify our virtue, to prove our love and fidelity toward him, and to earn for ourselves a crown greater in proportion to the trouble we have in bravely overcoming our enemy. And besides all this, how earnestly he exhorts us to do good! He tells us not to be careful about the transitory things of earth, but to devote our whole attention to the eternal riches of heaven: "Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth: where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven: where neither the rust nor moth doth consume, and where thieves do not break through nor steal" (Matt. 6 : 19, 20). We must not allow the talents and gifts of nature and grace that have been entrusted to us to lie idle, but rather make an advantageous use of them until the time of his coming: "Trade till I come" (Luke 19 : 13).

If God had given to us mortals the choice of a state of life when we come to the use of reason, who would content himself with the condition of a poor peasant when he could have that of a rich lord, or prince, or king? Now the freedom that is not allowed us in this miserable world God has reserved for us in heaven, where the highest position of immortal glory may be ours if we choose. There we can, if we wish, be princes, kings in glory and happiness; nay, the Almighty invites us to choose a high place. And shall we, through sheer laziness, refuse to accept what he offers us? Let us, with the help of God's grace, in future endeavor with all earnestness to reach the place in heaven he has prepared for us. Let us be sorry for the beautiful time of our past life that we have so uselessly squandered without merit, for the many opportunities of gaining glory that we have neglected, for the many grievous sins by which we

have completely forfeited all claim to heaven. Let us now begin to repair these losses with greater zeal, redouble our daily good works, have a pure intention in all our actions, and labor till the end of our lives to ascend higher in heaven, that, oh, Lord, since such is thy wish, our greater joy and glory may also increase thy honor and glory for all eternity. Amen.

Fifteenth Sunday After Pentecost.

THE FREQUENT CONSIDERATION OF DEATH.

"*Behold, a dead man was carried out.*"—Luke 7 : 12.

"Behold, a dead man was carried out;" one in the bloom of youth, who was enjoying life in all the vigor of health and strength, and who was, moreover, the only son of his sorrowing mother, the only consolation left to her in her widowed state! Thus death has no respect for age, or sex, or health, or prayers, or entreaties; he hurries all off without mercy, without distinction, young and old, great and lowly, together. Which of us who are here now alive and well shall be the first to be carried out dead? Shall it be I, or you, or some one else? We know not; but of a certainty every one's turn will come, sooner or later. And yet we think so little of it! Daily, almost, do we see a corpse carried to the grave, and we look at it as if it were nothing at all to us; nay, if sometimes a thought of death tries to intrude itself, we endeavor to shake it off as unnecessary, tending to melancholy and sadness. But what do we gain by thus trying to hide ourselves from death? Shall we be able to avoid it by not thinking of it? No, indeed! On the contrary, we should frequently and seriously meditate on it, for thereby we shall be helped to lead a good Christian life.

The frequent consideration and remembrance of death is one of the best means of leading a holy life.

The whole idea of a good, pious, Christian life may be summed up in the twofold precept: Avoid evil, do good. But if there is anything to act as a counterpoise against all sin and evil, if there is anything that can spur us on to good and virtuous actions, it is surely the frequent consideration of death, in which one is constantly reminding himself: I shall die; I shall one day be carried to the grave a corpse. In the very beginning of the world God impressed this fact on the mind of man as a necessary preservative against all crime. How happy was the state of Adam in paradise in his first innocence! There was a constant peace between the spirit and the flesh; there was no inclination to evil; all the appetites and desires were in the most harmonious subjection to reason, so that not one of them dared to move without the command of the will. And yet when God gave Adam the command not to eat the forbidden fruit he at the same time put the thought of death into his mind, lest he should transgress the command. "In what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death" (Gen. 2 : 17).

Wherever we go divine Providence has surrounded us with exhortations to this effect. Nearly everything we perceive by the senses is a picture and messenger of death, that calls out to us: Remember, oh, man, that thou must die! Hardly a day in the year on which we go out into the street that we do not see either a corpse being carried to the grave, or some one clad in mourning, or an altar in the church on which Mass is offered for souls departed; or some friend comes up to us and says such a one is dead. Nothing grows or is born on earth, in the air, or in the water, but something has died or decayed in its place. You who are now in the bloom of youth and crown yourselves with flowers, hear what those same flowers say to you: "Man born of a woman, living for a short time,. . . . who cometh forth

like a flower, and is destroyed" (Job 14 : 1, 2); to-day the flower blooms, to-morrow it decays. If you stand before the looking-glass to contemplate your beauty, even that announces death to you, for it reminds you of the words of the Psalmist: "Surely man passeth as an image" (Ps. 38 : 7). All the years, months, weeks, days, hours, and moments that we have lived say to each one of us: you are now so much nearer to the hour of your death. Fire, water, sword, bullet, poison, sicknesses of countless kinds, nay, our very pleasures, cry out to us and warn us that they are the instruments that help us to death.

If we only kept this thought before our minds, who would then dare abandon himself to a wicked life! I am altogether of the opinion that, as there is no power, no authority, no riches in the world that can protect us against the approach of death, so also there is no vice, no evil inclination, no bad habit, no matter how inveterate, that cannot be tamed, subdued, and eradicated altogether by the frequent consideration of death. The three springs from which all our vices flow are, as St. John says, "the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2 : 16); the desire of sensual pleasures, of worldly wealth, and of honor and esteem. Now, if I often thought to myself: I must die; in a few years, perhaps to-day or to-morrow, I shall be carried to the grave to be buried; what shall then become of my dignities, honors, the esteem of men? So, too, with whatever knowledge, science, skill I may have had; death hurries all away; the bell that tolls for my funeral will wipe out all memory of me, as the Psalmist says: "Their memory hath perished with a noise" (Ps. 9 : 7). Not a vestige shall I leave behind me, nor any memento except, perhaps, an epitaph which shall describe how I was once and am now no more. My dwelling shall be with and amongst the meanest paupers; my companions, my bed and my covering shall be worms and rottenness. If I thought of all this and

frequently recalled it, how quickly I should free myself from pride and vanity!

If we often thought to ourselves: We must die; in a few years, perhaps to-day or to-morrow, we shall be carried to the grave and buried; death will creep on stealthily, like a thief: "I will come to thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know at what hour I will come to thee" (Apoc. 3 : 3). Then everything will be taken from us and we shall be completely stripped; nothing will be left to us of all the money we have, of all our possessions and revenues; we shall not be able to take a penny with us on the journey; of the whole earth, nothing, not as much as a straw, will remain to us save and except the hole in which we shall be buried; the rich man, "when he shall die he shall take nothing away, nor shall his glory descend with him" (Ps. 48 : 18). Then will be seen to whom my goods belonged, and that they were merely lent to me for a time, and not given to me as their owner. Sometimes a dog follows two people who are going the same way; to whom does the dog belong? That you cannot say, for he follows both; but wait a little, till they come to a cross road and separate; then the dog will follow his master and leave the other. As long as a man is in life and has to do with the world, one might imagine that he really possesses worldly goods; but wait till he comes to the cross roads that lead to eternity, then you will see who is the real owner of his goods; for they at once leave the man who has been using them, allowing him to go forth bare and naked, and follow and remain with the world. Ah, when we think of this, is it possible we should be so infatuated with temporal things as to seek or possess anything wrongfully or unjustly, sacrificing thereby a long eternity, the treasures of heaven, our souls and our God?

If I often thought thus to myself: I must die. When? I know not; it may be to-day. I must die. Where? I know not; it may be in this very church. I must die. How? I know not; death may surprise me in the state of sin. And

where shall my soul go then? Before the judgment-seat of God, to give an account of all my actions, and to be sent either to the eternal joys of heaven or to the eternal torments of hell. If I frequently renewed this thought, could I sleep quietly one night in the state of sin? Could I offend God grievously for the sake of any earthly good, or honor, or pleasure? No, that could never be! "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin" (Ecclus. 7 : 40). Nothing is so powerful to keep us from sin as the frequent consideration of death.

And again, there is no more powerful incentive to practise virtue than the frequent thought and consideration of death. The motive and the end are one and the same thing. For instance: the end for which war is waged is to gain a victory over the enemy; the same victory is the motive or reason that fills the soldier with courage and urges him to venture boldly into the field and to fight bravely. The end that the sick man has in view is the recovery of his health; the same health is the motive that impels him to take the most bitter medicines readily, no matter how disagreeable they are to him naturally. The end of a business is gain; the same gain is the motive that impels the merchant to undertake the most dangerous journeys by land and sea, and to spare himself no trouble or inconvenience. So, too, death is the end of all things; but the same death can and must be the motive that impels us to do good works during life, that our death may be a happy one.

Such are the thoughts that the consideration of death must suggest to any Christian who desires to die well and to make sure of his salvation. I must die, he says to himself; I know not when; it may be to-day or to-morrow. As long as I am in this life, so long does the period of combat last for me; if I do not gain the victory before death I shall never gain it for all eternity. Now is the time for me to work, as far as my soul is concerned; what I do not gain before death I must do without for all eternity. Therefore I must and will now heap up merit by

the practise of good works, so that I may have something to live on forever in heaven. Death will, in a moment, take from me the money and other things that I have amassed with so much trouble; be it so! I care little for such goods. But it cannot take from me the alms I have given and the other works of Christian charity I have performed. These shall be safely stored up for me in heaven by our Lord himself. Therefore I will now bestow a good part of my temporal wealth in charity, thus sending it on before me into eternity. Death will strip me of all my clothing. No matter; it cannot take from me the beautiful robe of sanctifying grace. Death will at once deprive me of all pleasures and comforts and of the love and society of men. Let it do so! I shall not require those things at the end of my life. But it cannot take from me my prayers, my morning and evening devotions, my frequent confessions and holy Communions, my constant intimacy with God. These things shall remain with me; these shall follow me into eternity: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord. From henceforth now, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors: for their works follow them" (Apoc. 14 : 13). Death will give my body over to the worms, to be changed in a short time into dust and ashes. But all the more earnestly will I now mortify that flesh with toil and labor, with temperance and fasting, with voluntary penances and austerities, and so wear it away in the zealous service of my God.

The axe is already laid at the root of the tree; death will probably soon strike the last blow. What are you doing? There is no time to be lost. Where are your prayers, your fasting, penance and mortification? It will be too late bye-and-bye to look after those things. Now is the time to be up and doing! If you wish to lead good and holy lives the best thing for you to do is to meditate frequently on death. "Behold, a dead man was carried out." It is not convenient for you to kneel down beside a coffin every day; but you can daily follow the advice of

Thomas à Kempis, and think, for instance, when you get up in the morning: this evening I may be lying dead. When going to rest: perhaps I shall be found dead in my bed to-morrow morning. If a neighbor, friend, or acquaintance dies, you can think: one day or other my turn will come, too. If you hear the funeral bell tolling: this bell will one day ring for me also. When going out of the house: one day I shall be carried out of this house dead. When passing by a cemetery: that place will be my home one of these days; how would I wish to have lived when that time comes? Must I not, then, prepare for that supreme hour? Let those be your thoughts, that your resolution. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord." Amen.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

HOW TO MAKE THE THOUGHT OF DEATH USEFUL.

"*Behold there was a certain man before him that had the dropsy.*—Luke 14: 2.

We have seen how, when our Lord was approaching the city of Naim, "a dead man was carried out;" in to-day's Gospel we read that "there was a certain man before him that had the dropsy;" this man was dangerously ill, and would certainly have died had not our Lord cured him. Here, again, we have a warning that we must die, a sermon and an exhortation to think often of death. In my last sermon I showed you how the frequent meditation of death is a powerful means to induce us to do good, and to avoid evil. To-day I have another opportunity of treating of the same matter, and of showing in

what manner we may derive advantage from the frequent meditation of death.

We must think of death seriously, and in such a way that the thought may influence our future actions.

Not every thought of death inspires us to lead a holy life. There are many things that remind us that we must die, no matter how much we try to shun the thought of death; but the thought thus inspired is generally a superficial one, that touches only the imagination—a useless thought, that annoys without helping one to amendment of life. The recollection of death should be lively, effective, and apt to have an influence on our future actions, such as God spoke of to Moses: "Oh, that they would be wise and would understand, and would provide for their last end!" (Deut. 32 : 29.) That is, that they would now, during their lifetime, find out what will be good for them at the end, what will be then a source of joy, of sorrow, of terror to them, and would now try to do what they shall then wish to have done, to amend what they shall then wish to have amended, to avoid what they shall then wish to have avoided.

Our life is a passage, and a very dangerous one; for we have to bring our one immortal soul from time to eternity. Can we then afford to take blindly the first way that seems a little safe, and trust ourselves to it? No; he who wishes to act prudently and secure his soul's salvation goes far more carefully to work. Now, he thinks, while I am strong and healthy, this or that appears good and desirable to me; but how will it be hereafter? Will it bring me to the haven of salvation? What shall I think of it at the end of my life? Oh, if we acted thus, how far different would be our opinion of things from what it now is! As it is, our understanding, especially in what concerns our souls, is darkened and blinded by many evil inclinations and appetites, by our love for creatures and by our own self-love, so that it is almost incapable of forming a correct judg-

ment of good and evil. But when we come to the last supreme hour; when the lighted candle is in our hand, the eyes of the body are indeed dimmed, but the eyes of the mind become all the clearer; and how our judgment, our wishes and desires will then be altered! When man begins to sleep the last sleep his eyes will be opened for the first time, and he will see what he before neither wished nor tried to see. The sins that he committed through culpable ignorance and therefore did not look on as evil, or that he excused and palliated, or even thought nothing of, "when he shall sleep," when he is at the point of death, they shall weigh on his conscience like a millstone. Then will he say, as the wicked king Antiochus said on his death-bed: "Into what tribulation am I come, and into what floods of sorrow, wherein now I am: I that was pleasant and beloved in my power. But now I remember the evils that I did in Jerusalem" (1 Mach. 6 : 11, 12). Now I remember, will many a one cry out, now I remember the sins I committed at home, in the garden, in company, alone, which my sloth, my wilful blindness concealed from me. Alas! what anguish and fear have come upon me now about things that I formerly laughed at!

Truly, now is the time to think and to weigh everything carefully in the balance of death. Now, while we are still in life and have no fear of death, we often fear and avoid what we shall at the end wish to have eagerly embraced; now we long and yearn for and look on as a great happiness what we shall then wish we had avoided as the greatest evil. Solitude, humiliation, self-denial, mortification of the senses, poverty, crosses and misery, the bare idea of such things fills us now with aversion and disgust; but how differently death will speak to us of those things!

It sometimes happens that two women of equal age and standing go to church together; the one pious, humble, modest, according to the Christian law; the other worldly, vain, light-minded, bold. In the same way two young men meet;

the one quiet, well-reared, inclined to piety and the fear of God; the other insolent, proud, dissolute. You know very well that if one of two contending parties gives way voluntarily to the other the latter gains the case, and the suit is at an end even before the judge pronounces sentence. Wait now, and see which of the parties in question will be the first to yield. "When he shall sleep, he shall open his eyes." When they come to the point of death their eyes will be opened. Then will the dissolute young man moan and sigh, if not in words, at least with the heart, if so much time shall be given him: "Therefore we have erred" (Wisd. 5 : 6). Ah, what a mistake I have made! In what a wretched, immoral, godless manner I have spent my young years! What will now become of my soul? Ah, would that I had served my God better! Then will the tepid, luxurious, idle, rich man cry out, as the pious Philip II. of Spain did on his death-bed: "How happy I would be now if I had spent my life in some corner of a desert." Then will he sigh forth, like a certain dying rich man: "I have built many houses on earth; would that I had built even one small cell in heaven!" Then he will cry out with that dying courtier: "I have served a mortal king for some forty years; would that I had spent the twentieth part of that time in the service of the Emperor of heaven! I have written many reams of paper; would that I had used one leaf to write out my sins for a general confession!" Then will that vain woman, if so much grace will be given her, full of anguish and remorse, send for a confessor, and exclaim with lips and heart: Ah, would to God! Ah, if I had only lived a more pious, devout, and Christian life! If I had only made more use of my crucifix than of my looking-glass! If I had only been more zealous in going to adore God in the church, and in attending sermons and devotions, than in paying visits to mere mortals! If I had only my rosary more frequently in my hands than the pack of cards! If I had only wrapped myself up in a mantle many a time, so that no eye could see me,

instead of giving scandal to others by my indecent dress! If I had only spent more time in adorning my soul with virtues than in tricking out my body with vain apparel! If I had only given to Christ in his poor what I squandered on luxuries and superfluities! Now you wish you had acted like those whose piety and modesty you used to hold in derision. So you have completely changed your judgment; and why? The blessed candle that I hold in my hand to remind me that I am about to journey into eternity has filled my eyes with such a powerful light that I now can see what I before was blind to. I have made a great mistake; I must acknowledge it! Sighs of that kind and a repentance that in many cases comes too late are common enough amongst all sinners and tepid Christians who, during their lives, have seldom thought of death; they are like moles: blind during life, and able to see only when at the point of death.

We should not forget this when we think of death, and should try to live as we shall wish to have lived at the last. Is the life that I am now leading one that will bring comfort or anguish to me on my death-bed? Should I like to die with the goods of others in my possession, in that dangerous intimacy, in that impure love in which I have hitherto lived? Should I like to die in that hatred and anger against my neighbor, with that secret sin on my conscience that I have not yet properly confessed? Ah, no! God forbid! Why, then, should I wait any longer, since death may surprise me in any place, at any time? At once, therefore, I will restore those ill-gotten goods, avoid that dangerous intimacy and occasion, change that hatred into Christian charity and meekness, confess my sins candidly, and follow the humble Gospel of Christ to the best of my ability! That is the real, practical manner of thinking on death.

"Oh, that they would be wise and would understand, and would provide for their last end!" Oh, if we all frequently thought of death in that manner! No other means should we require to lead a Christian life, no other to die a happy death.

This seems to be what our Lord desired to teach us when he raised the dead to life. How did he act when he raised the daughter of Jairus? "He went in and took her by the hand. And the maid arose." This was all the ceremony he used on that occasion, and having worked the miracle he went his way. How did he act in the case of the widow's son of Naim? "Young man," he exclaimed, "I say to thee, arise." The dead man stood up, "and he gave him to his mother." That was all. He raised Lazarus from the grave. "Lazarus," he cried out, "come forth. And presently he that had been dead came forth. Jesus said to them: Loose him and let him go." Why did he do no more on those occasions? Because, when healing the sick, he generally gave an exhortation to the people, as was the case with the man born blind and of the paralytic man, to the latter of whom he addressed this exhortation before dismissing him: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee." Why did he not act in the same manner when raising the dead, especially since he had such a fine opportunity of exhorting the people to good, and, besides, those whom he restored to life being still young, would require some words of warning to induce them to avoid the dangers that threaten youth? No, that was not necessary; for death itself was their best teacher. For he who has once died and knows what death is requires no other master to teach him to live well; while the mere sight of dead people was already sermon enough for the bystanders. He who meditates seriously on death needs no other incentive to amend his life and avoid sin: "For death itself is the best teacher."

Why are we so backward in meditating on death? Why do we so obstinately close our hearts to it, although it will infallibly come to each and every one of us? How carefully we set about some temporal end we have in view, although we may never gain it! What preparations we make to entertain a dear friend, although he may never come to visit us! How eagerly you

work and plan in order to leave rich legacies to your children, although they may die before you! Death is infallibly certain for all; why, then, do you not think of it? Why do you not take care that you may once die well? Once, I say; because if you make any mistake in dying, you shall never have the chance of repairing it. And why should you not think of death? Tell me, poor mortal, why do you so obstinately reject such a wholesome consideration? You must die; you may die this very moment. If death were to come to you now, and it is actually coming to many, and may easily come to you, you would go to hell for all eternity.

Now is the time to prepare. Now is the time for frequent and mature reflection. Now is the time to do that which will render the death that certainly awaits us a happy one! "In all his works let man say to himself: if you were now about to die, would you do this?" In all temptations and occasions of sin let each one ask himself: if I were now about to die, would I commit that sin? Would I speak, act, think in that manner? Would I listen to that talk, look at that object? Would I permit that person to act as he does? And if I should, at the hour of death, wish to have acted in a certain way, let me choose that way now. Perhaps death is actually very near me. Oh, happy man who has death daily before his eyes! He belongs to the number of those faithful servants of whom our Lord has said in the Gospel: "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching" (Luke 12 : 37). Amen.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CAREFUL PREPARATION FOR DEATH.

"I therefore beseech you . . . that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called.—Ephes. 4: 1.

According to St. Paul, in the Epistle of to-day, we must persevere in the way of virtue, so that our lives may be consistent with the holiness of the Christian faith, to which they were called by God in preference to many nations. For we have received from the infinite goodness of God the great grace of vocation to the true Catholic Christian faith. We are called, but in order to be chosen we must frequently think of death with deep attention and practically, so that our meditations may urge us to lead a good life, that we may die a happy death. That is the meaning of the words of the Apostle: "I therefore beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation in which you are called;" that you may be thereby prepared for death. How, and for how long a time, should we prepare? I answer:

For a long time beforehand, nay, all the time of our lives, we should prepare for the approach of death.

The more important a business, the more depends on it, the less experience we have of it, and the more difficult it is in itself, the greater also will be the care we take, the longer the preparation we make, so that it may terminate favorably. A lawyer has undertaken a case on which depends the gain or loss of some hundred thousand dollars. His opponent is very powerful; he spares no trouble or expense, and seeks patrons for his

cause wherever he can find them to insure his own success and your injury. He is most warmly urged and exhorted to take an interest in the case, and to do his best to disprove the documents and writings that will be brought forward against him. Tell me, is there any lawyer in the world who values his own honor and profit who would trust the whole matter to his own cleverness, ingenuity, and good memory, so far as to put off studying the case until the very last day, when the judge is ready to pronounce sentence, and would then hope to gain the case by hurriedly reading over the evidence and studying the proofs? No, indeed! our experience teaches far differently. For we know what an amount of thought, study, speculation, examination, running hither and thither, finding out facts and writing it costs in order to win a case. And how often are not meals interrupted, sleep shortened, and years of toil undertaken in order to gain a suit that is perhaps not worth the twentieth part of the costs? You, ladies and gentlemen, you have to marry your daughters to husbands suitable to their rank. The contract is agreed to, the date for the marriage fixed; do you think also of the bride's trousseau, of the clothes suitable for the occasion, of the entertainments and wedding festivities that have to be given? Truly you do! But when do you begin to prepare these things? You wait, do you not, until the day comes when the wedding party is going to church? Not by any means, you answer; we should be very foolish to wait as long as that. We make our preparations weeks and months beforehand. Why so? Because otherwise we should be too late, and it is a matter in which our honor is concerned. So prudent are we in temporal things.

Is the affair of our eternal salvation, then, of less importance, so that we can put it off until the time when it is to be really concluded? Our Lord compares his coming at our death to that of the bridegroom who knocks in the middle of the night, when no one expects him: "And at midnight there was a cry

made: Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet him" (Matt. 25 : 6). At your last breath you shall hear the words: go forth to meet him; arise; now is the time in which you are to be espoused to the sovereign Ruler of the world, to reign with him for all eternity. Where is the wedding-garment of sanctifying grace? Where are your ornaments, your jewels, your merits and virtues, that you may appear worthily before such a great Lord? Woe to you if you should have put off to the last moment the preparation for the great marriage-feast! I know you not, the Bridegroom will say, as he said to the foolish virgins who had not oil in their lamps. "They that were ready went in with him to the marriage" (Matt. 6: 10); "they that were ready," not they who then began for the first time to prepare. These latter were excluded: "the door was shut" (Matt. 15 : 10). Each one of us has a difficult, very important, and very complicated suit depending on the divine justice. It is a difficult suit, because many and very many, nay, the most of men, and perhaps the most of adult Christians will lose it. It is a very important suit, because on its gain or loss depends the gain or loss, not of a piece of land, not of a capital of a million of dollars, but of an immortal soul; on its issue depends whether our lot for eternity shall be with the reprobate or the elect. It is a very complicated suit; the demons of hell, the dangerous occasions that are to be met with in the world, and the lusts of the flesh are our opponents, whose sole effort from the beginning of our lives is to destroy us. And if we enter into our own consciences, we must acknowledge that we have made matters much worse through our own fault, by our manifold sins.

Have we not every reason to prepare ourselves in time and with all earnestness, to examine our consciences, to repent of our sins, and to settle our accounts with God? In time, I say; for why should we wait any longer? What grounds can we have for a hope of salvation if we defer our preparation for death till death itself is at hand? Shall we, perhaps, be able to

put it off until we are ready? That kind of a thing might indeed be done in temporal affairs. If it is found that after due diligence and care all the things required for the marriage-feast are not ready, the ceremony is put off for a week or two, or even longer if necessary. If a lawsuit is decided against me the first time, I can appeal and have a new trial. But what can we put in the way of death to defer his coming? Nothing. It is impossible to put him off; whether we are ready or not, we must go at the appointed time.

In temporal matters, if one makes a mistake the first time, he can be on his guard the second time and repair his former error. If you have lost a lawsuit and suffered injury thereby, you can make up for the loss by redoubled diligence. But if you have once made a mistake in death, there is no chance of coming back to amend it. If you have lost the suit of your eternal salvation, because you did not prepare in time, you have lost it without any possibility of regaining it. Even if one makes a mistake in matters concerning his eternal salvation during life, there is still time to recover what has been lost. If to-day I were to make a sacrilegious confession, either through want of proper preparation or because I have not true sorrow for my sins, or because I have concealed a sin wilfully, that would be truly a great evil, great enough to expose me to the danger of damnation; but yet I must not despair; to-morrow, or even to-day, I can go to confession again and free my soul from the evil. But if I am so unfortunate as to die an unhappy death, I cannot come back any more, but must remain forever in the state in which death has found me.

What follows from this? That since our salvation or damnation depends on our death; since we cannot hope for anything greater than salvation, or dread and fear anything more than damnation, the most important, nay, the only business we have to attend to during life, the one end to which should be directed all our thoughts and cares, should be to die a happy death; and

hence we must at all times use our utmost diligence in preparing to die well, and be always ready for the hour when the Lord will come to take us. This is the reason why we are on this earth, that we may prepare worthily for his coming. This is the thought that should be always before our minds to stimulate us; that should be always in our memories crying out to us: prepare for death! Whenever the clock strikes we are already another hour nearer to death. During our whole lives we should learn how to die.

Why are we so careless, indifferent, and forgetful in this great affair on which all depends? Everything else in the world interests us; in everything else we wish to act with prudence. To live, to live long, to live in good health, fortune and prosperity, to avoid suffering and misfortune; this thought drives the hand to labor, the feet to activity, the whole mind to reflection and meditation; for these things every one wishes to be prepared, and dreads coming too late. Death and what comes after it is almost the only thing that is forgotten. The last thought with most people is when, how, or where they shall die, or what means they should use to die well. The mere remembrance of death and eternity, suggested in a sermon, is looked on with chagrin and annoyance, and thrust out of the mind as a melancholy thought, likely to disturb our peace and the enjoyment of those sensual pleasures that we do not wish to give up.

Most men live in such a manner that they are hardly aware of death at all until he knocks at their doors and is about to strike the fatal blow. How many there are amongst you who require a mortal illness, the very presence of death, to warn you effectively to prepare for eternity! After twenty, thirty, forty, fifty years squandered away without doing anything for salvation; after body and soul have been exhausted in the service of some earthly master, who cannot help to gain heaven; after having devoted all one's cares, thoughts, and labor to the world; after

these things; after having suffered so much discomfort, annoyance, and misery without resignation to the will of God, without any profit for eternity; after having spent in vanity, idleness, and sin of all kinds the precious time given by God; after having bestowed hardly a thought on the last end; after the conscience has been hardly once purified by a true repentance; after all this death comes and summons us into eternity. Then it is too late to know that we must die. Then it is in vain that we sigh for time to prepare, to amend our lives, to do something for our soul; then we must die as we have lived, unprepared.

Seneca justly looked on him as a fool who feared death only when he heard the thunder rolling and saw the lightning flashing: "Oh, foolish man, and forgetful of your frailty, if you fear death only when it thunders!" If there were any exceptions to the general law of death; if one by forgetting death and rejecting all thought of it could avoid it and save himself from the common fate, then, indeed, we should be excused for seeking all sorts of means of escaping it, of not thinking of it, instead of preparing for its approach; like little children who, when they imagine they see a ghost, put their hands before their eyes, and think that they cannot be seen then and are safe from all danger. But we may cover our eyes as much as we please, we may think of it or not, death will come on at his own pace, nearer and nearer every day, hour, and moment; and he will hurry us off without any one being able to protect us from him. The sentence already pronounced is irrevocable: "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Hebr. 9 : 27), and no one is excepted. To all, rich and poor, young and old, healthy and sick, prince and peasant, are the words uttered: "Take order with thy house, for thou shalt die and not live" (Is. 38 : 1).

Never forget that it is you who must die, that another will come after you and succeed to your place. Ah, why, then, do you live so careless of your soul? Why do you think so little

of the long eternity of happiness or misery that awaits you? "You shall die and shall not live;" it is you who must die, and that perhaps soon; you cannot send another in your place into eternity; you yourself must journey thither, and leave behind all that you ever possessed or shall possess in the world. Why, then, should you be so concerned for temporal things, since you cannot take them with you? Why do you desire, seek, and love that which God has forbidden you to seek and love? Why do you long for that which will keep you from heaven, embitter your death, and precipitate you into the flames of hell forever?

Prepare for death. But in what manner? At once do that which you shall have to do in your last illness if you wish to die well, but which you shall then possibly not be able to do properly. To square our accounts with God, to bewail all the sins of our past lives with a contrite heart, and candidly confess them in the holy Sacrament of Penance, to form the earnest purpose of never again, for all eternity, committing a sin, to make what restitution you can for the injuries done your neighbor in his property or character, to avoid the proximate occasion of sin, and atone, by good example, for scandal given, to lay aside completely all feelings of disunion, hatred, and anger against your neighbor, and to pardon from the heart and be reconciled to all who have injured you, to make up for lost time by being more zealous in the service of God; ah, to do all that when death is already knocking at the door, when the body is writhing in pain, the heart filled with anguish and the mind bewildered, ah, truly that is not the time for such a weighty business! Therefore the beginning must be made at once, and that to-day, so that everything may be duly attended to. Now you must do what you shall wish to have done on your death-bed, but shall then be unable to do; that is, you must live as you shall desire to have lived on your death-bed; you must do and avoid what on your death-bed you shall wish to have done and

avoided, and by a frequent reception of the holy Sacraments, resignation to the will of God, patience under trials, and a good supernatural intention in all your daily duties, you must prepare for the coming of the Lord. Amen.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE PREMATURE DEATH OF THE IDLE.

"*They brought to him one sick of the palsy, lying in a bed.*—Matt. 9:2.

Pitiable is the state of one in a palsy! Afflicted in every member of his body, he can scarcely move a finger, much less can he walk or stand, or help himself in any way; all he can do is to lie in bed. He is of no use to any one, to himself or to others, but is rather a burden; and unless he is cured in some extraordinary way the only thing that he can hope for is a speedy death. The paralytic man is a true picture of the idle man, who wastes his precious time doing nothing or squanders it in useless occupations; he is of no good to himself or to others, and if he does not amend his life what else can he expect from God but to be called away by a premature death? So it is, as I now proceed to prove.

The idle man is of no use in the world; therefore he deserves that God should take him out of it by a premature death.

There is no creature in the whole world, no matter how vile it may be, that is not of some use or other. The various weeds that grow in our gardens and fields and on the public highways, and that are trodden under foot by the passers-by; the insects,

flies, wasps, and vermin that torment us, have been created for a special object, and they are useful and helpful to men, although we cannot always see how that is. Nothing can be utterly useless; and if it were possible for any creature to have no object for its existence that creature, according to philosophers, would at once be rejected and cast out by nature as superfluous. "A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, and found none." What! said he in anger to his gardener: "Behold, for these three years I come seeking fruit on this tree, and I find none." Why should I allow it to stand any longer? "Cut it down, therefore; why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke 13 : 6, 7.) A good tree might be planted in the place of this useless one. Away with it, therefore, and throw it into the fire. Here you have a vivid picture of the man who leads an idle life, who spends the greater part of the day doing nothing; that is, in sleeping late in the morning, taking a long time to dress, eating and drinking, paying and receiving visits, gambling and amusing himself, walking, standing at the door and window talking and chatting. In a word, he wastes the day in trifles of all kinds, has no order in important affairs, and no becoming occupation for head or hand. Why cumbereth he the ground? Why should a man of that kind remain on earth any longer? Come, death! so must the angry Creator say; cut him down! away with that useless tree! Let that idle man be no longer of the number of the living! For he is good for nothing; neither for himself, nor for others, nor for God!

1. He is useless for himself because he does nothing for the end of his creation. "Man is born to labor, and the bird to fly" (Job 5 : 7); and God has commanded man to work constantly and diligently, that he may gain eternal rest. Yes, there is no creature on earth less adapted for rest and idleness than man. And no one is dispensed from this, no matter what his rank or condition may be; no one is exempted from the law of toil and

labor. Not even the prince and first father of all men, Adam, could evade it. While he was still innocent and just, and in the garden of paradise, where idleness was not so apt as it now is to lead to a wicked, reckless life—even there he was commanded by God to labor: "And the Lord God. . .put him into the paradise of pleasure, to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2 : 15). But was Adam obliged to work in order to provide himself with food? No; he had not to work for a livelihood, since he was master of the whole earth, and that earth would of itself, without cultivation, have produced fruits and means of livelihood in abundance. Why, then, had he to work? For the sake of having a becoming occupation, that he might live as a reasonable being who must never be idle, but always have some suitable work to employ his time at. But when Adam transgressed the divine command, ate the forbidden fruit, lost his first justice, and was expelled from paradise, how was it with him then? Alas! then was another sentence pronounced on him; for he had to work then, not merely for the sake of having a becoming occupation, but to earn his bread with toil and labor and the sweat of his brow: a sentence which fell on all his descendants. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread," said God to him, "till thou return to the earth out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art, and into dust shalt thou return."

2. A dead body is not only useless to itself, because it can neither walk, nor stand, nor see, nor hear, nor move, but it is also troublesome, injurious, and intolerable to others who are in the house in which it is lying; for once it begins to decay it fills the place with an abominable stench; therefore it is put out of sight and buried as soon as possible. This is the custom in the world. It is also the way in which God is wont to act with the idle man, as we read in the parable of the barren fig-tree. "Why cumbereth it the ground?" as if to say: since that tree is barren it ought to be cut down. But that is not the only mischief it does. It cumbers the ground; it takes up the place of a

fruitful tree, and moreover deprives the trees and plants in its neighborhood of the moisture and nourishment they should have. Away with it, then; cut it down; I will no longer have it in my vineyard. So, too, God says: Why should that idle man live any longer? He bears no fruit for his soul, and takes up the place of others who would employ their time in a manner more pleasing to God and more useful to the world. The luxuries that he indulges in daily could feed many decent poor, who can earn hardly enough by hard labor to support themselves and their children. What he spends on dress for mere outward show could clothe many a poor person decently. What he squanders in gambling and amusing himself could support many a poor family. The duties he has undertaken to perform he neglects, because he dislikes work; thus he is the cause of injury to others. Cut it down therefore! Away with the barren tree! Just as the tree deserves to be cut down, so the idle man ought to be cut off from the number of the living.

Amongst all well-ordered nations and peoples idleness was always held in detestation, as hurtful not only to the individual, but to the community at large. Cleomenes, the Spartan king, being asked why he did not destroy his enemy, as he could easily have done, answered: "No, that would not be good for my country; as long as we have an enemy to fight we have occupation, and that will keep us from idleness, which is the source of all disorder and misfortune in a country, and is most injurious to the common weal." Such, too, was the opinion of Scipio, a wise and experienced man amongst the ancient Romans. These people had subdued almost the whole world, and after they had conquered the Carthaginians and Greeks, who had resisted them longest, their exultation knew no bounds. "Now," they said, "our republic is in safety." "And now, too," said Scipio with a deep sigh, "our republic is in the greatest danger, greater than ever before; for now that we have no foreign enemy to fight idleness will show itself amongst us,

and with it the vices that spring from it, and finally the ruin of our republic." And subsequent events proved the truth of these words.

3. The idler is useless; for if he is of no use to himself or to his neighbor, neither is he of any to his God, whom he should serve. There are many who imagine that to avoid idleness and fill up the time with some becoming occupation, thus turning it to profit for one's soul, is necessary only for those who cannot otherwise find the means of livelihood, or as a salutary work of supererogation for those who desire to gain greater glory in heaven; but that there is no law of God binding every one under pain of sin to work. But they are vastly mistaken. It is certain that all adults who do not receive heaven as their reward will be punished forever in hell; now the Lord has said that he will not give heaven unless to those who work diligently for it: "Call the laborers and pay them their hire" (Matt. 22 : 8). And it is also infallibly certain that the just God will demand a strict account of every idle word: "But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment" (Matt. 12 : 36). It is to no purpose that they try to excuse themselves by saying: we do no harm; we do not commit a sin by seeking our comfort. What? You do no harm? You lead an idle life, and commit no sin? That is, humanly speaking, an impossibility. Even if no mortal sin is committed for some time, that very idleness itself is evil doing. For not to do good—what is it, if not to do evil? "Hand in hand the evil man shall not be innocent" (Prov. 11 : 21); when the hands are folded together, doing nothing and having nothing to do, there is little use in looking for innocence and piety.

The Scripture says of Magdalene: "Behold a woman that was in the city a sinner" (Luke 7 : 36). In what did her wickedness consist, that she was called a sinner? Mary Magdalene appeared to a pious person in Spain who was saying the office

in her honor, and said to that person: "In my lifetime I was a notorious sinner in the city, yet not in the way in which people generally understand the term; for the impure and unchaste actions imputed to me I never even dreamt of. I was of noble birth, and dwelt in a castle, and my only sin was idleness." In the morning (so continues the description of her life), after lying long in bed, her whole occupation was to stand before the looking-glass and contemplate her beauty, taking a vain pleasure therein, curling her hair, and dressing in costly array; she was not content with the natural comeliness given her by God, but sought to increase it by the use of all sorts of cosmetics. Thus splendidly dressed, after having taken her meals, she did nothing the whole day but walk about the city, showing herself off and trying to attract attention. There was no social gathering at which Magdalene was not present, no company in which she was not to be found. She laughed, joked, and amused herself till late at night, and thereby gave occasion for impure desires in some, for rash judgments, suspicions, and envy in others, and scandal in nearly all. This was the life that deserved to be described by the Holy Ghost in the words: "A woman that was in the city a sinner." And she was the woman from whom our Lord drove out seven devils, that is, the seven deadly sins. And yet her life was only an idle, pleasure-seeking life.

How many Magdalenes are there not nowadays in our Christian cities? How many young girls and married women who lead the same useless, luxurious life? How many are there not of the male sex who could with reason be classed amongst them in this respect, for they consume the precious time of their youth and manhood in walking about the streets, paying useless visits, gambling, eating, drinking, and doing nothing? And yet they maintain that they are doing no harm in all this, and are indignant with those who dare to describe them as sinners in the city! But when they appear before the judgment-

seat of God they shall learn, when too late, what they were in life; namely, useless for themselves and their own souls, which they neglected; useless for their neighbor and their children, to whom they gave bad example; useless, finally, for their God and for his service, which they did not render him. Amen.

Nineteenth Sunday After Pentecost.

The Remorse of the Dying on Account of Time Lost Through Idleness.

"*But they neglected and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise.*"—Matt. 22 : 5.

God has prepared for his Son a marriage-feast in heaven, to which he has invited all men, that they may share with him in all imaginable joys; for he sincerely wishes all men to be saved. "He sent his servants to call them that were invited to the marriage: and they would not come." That is, some do not desire to go to heaven; for of their own accord they hasten to hell, by spending their time in sin and vice. Others are careless about heaven: "They neglected, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise." These are the idle, who would indeed willingly come to the heavenly marriage-feast, but they do not wish to put themselves to any trouble about it, since they spend the precious time given them by God for the sole purpose of serving him and gaining heaven in idleness or in useless occupations, or in mere temporal cares, without directing their intentions to God or to the salvation of their souls.

But the time lost in idleness or useless occupations will be a source of remorse, fear, and despair to the dying.

The present time is the time for sowing; the time that God has given us to work out our salvation. The seed is the use we make of that time; the seed of eternity. The fruit cannot be hindered in its growth by bad seasons, heat or cold, rain or inundation, wind or weather, worm or insect. It all depends on how we sow the seed, that is, employ our time. If it is well sown, if our time is well employed, what fruit, what reward may we expect? A kingdom? No; more than that. The whole world, with all its wealth and riches? Ah, if you had gained it and nothing more you would have worked in vain. For everything that passes with time is not worth time.

It is a great blessing for us to use our time well, and an irreparable loss to misspend it. Ask the lost souls to tell us what the loss of time has caused them to suffer. This loss, they say, is as great as the Good from which we are forever excluded; great as our misery; terrible as the fire that the divine anger fans to torment us! If we had back one of those afternoons that we wasted in immoderate drinking, and in playing dice and cards; one of the evenings that we spent in dangerous company; one of the mornings that we lost by lying too long in bed, or in spending too much time in dressing, or in idle thoughts, what would we not do? Ah, we would free ourselves from an unhappy eternity by true repentance, and gain a joyful eternity in heaven! But in vain do we expect that much! We must go on in our despair! There is not an hour, or a quarter of an hour, or a minute, or a moment for us! Our tears and sorrow are too late! During our lives we could thereby have freed ourselves from everlasting misery; now time is no more for us!

How great will be the mental anguish and pain that will pierce the heart of the dying man who has passed a lifetime in useless occupations or idleness, doing nothing for his soul; and

what will his feelings be when he looks back on the years he has wasted. I have lived twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or more years. All this beautiful time is over. In any moment of it I could have gained eternal glory in heaven! Would that I had abstained from sin! Would that I had always kept in the grace of God! Would that I had been more regular in receiving the Sacraments, in making use of the golden opportunities afforded me, in performing works of charity and mercy! What a rich treasure of merit and eternal joys I should have amassed, that the just Judge would give me now! But alas! it is too late, and I have lost all forever! Poor and naked I must go into the house of my eternity, while others, amongst whom I might have been, enter it with joy and exultation, as the Lord says: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Going they went and wept, casting their seeds. But coming they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves" (Ps. 125 : 5-7). And I must look on with empty hands and tearful eyes!

Oh, vanished years! where are ye? If I could only call you back now! Unhappy me! I must exclaim with that secretary of Francis I., king of France, as he lay on his death-bed; unhappy me! I have spent so many years, and used up so many reams of paper in the service of my king; would that I had spent but one day and used but one sheet of paper to write thereon a general confession for the good of my poor soul! Would that I had but one hour of the many I have wasted, that I might regain lost time and appease my Judge before I die. But, to my grief and sorrow, I cannot now expect another moment of time! I hear resounding in my ears the words: "Time shall be no longer" (Apoc. 10 : 6), the season for sowing is gone by; not a grain can be planted any more with the hope of a harvest. Torments and despair will await me in hell. In this condition of fear and anguish will depart the soul of the man who has wasted his time during life in idleness or in vanities useless for his salvation.

This wholesome thought, which comes too late for the dying, is meant for us who are still alive and well, and can still make a good use of the present time. We must therefore make provision now, that we may not on our death-beds have cause to fear a long eternity of despair and wailing. "The present time is the time for sowing." What is not sown then can never bear fruit, nor be garnered in, but is and remains lost forever. The present-time is not a time for idling or loitering; it is not a time for useless talk, amusements, gambling, long sleep and vain pleasures, much less for sin and vice; for it is intended by God for the sole purpose of working out the salvation of our immortal souls, and preparing ourselves for a happy death. How foolish to hear people say: let us talk to pass away an hour; let us play, amuse ourselves, walk about to pass away the time. And have you nothing better to do? Is that the way to use the time that the Creator has granted you to do penance, to obtain pardon, to acquire grace, to merit glory? Will you waste in useless talk and frivolity the precious hour that God has given you for such a lofty purpose? What must we think when we hear young people, especially when they are of different sexes, say to each other in their young years: "Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present, and let us speedily use the creatures as in youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly wine, and ointments; and let not the flower of the time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered" (Wisd. 2 : 6-8).

Oh, foolish mortals! what are you saying? If you saw a gardener picking the blossoms off the trees in spring, and making them into a nosegay because they are beautiful, what would you think of him? You would say that he is either mad or an unfaithful servant, inasmuch as he thus destroys all prospects of fruit. Is not that the case? Because it is from the blossom that the fruit has to come, and if that is destroyed there can be no fruit. "Let not the flower of the time pass by us," you say;

what are the flowers, the blossoms of this time? They are the works done in this life, from which the fruit is to grow for eternity; if you break off these blossoms, and use the time only for your own comfort, sensuality, and pleasure, what sort of fruit can you have from time for eternity? Certainly no other but the sad and despairing remembrance of lost time.

There is no lively faith in those idle men. Experience teaches in countless ways that human life is very short; that its years are uncertain; that God has appointed for one ten, for another twenty, for a third thirty, forty, fifty years; that no one knows how many years he has to live. Now, if we only believed practically, and often reflected deeply on the fact that on the good or bad use of this uncertain time depends eternal happiness in heaven or eternal misery in hell, would it be possible for a Christian who professes to fear hell and desire heaven to squander away so wretchedly the beautiful time of his life, instead of using it to work out his salvation?

"Therefore, whilst we have time let us work good" (Gal. 6 : 10). Such is the conclusion to which St. Paul exhorts us. Nothing remains of the time that we have lived up to this; perhaps the greater part of it has been wasted; and, once for all, the time that we do not devote to God and our soul is lost forever. Oh, how great the loss of all the graces and merits we might have gained in that time! But as we cannot recall it, let us at least try to make up for it by renewed diligence, like the traveler who, having lost his way in the forest and wandered about for hours on the wrong path, walks much quicker when he has found out his mistake, in order to arrive at his destination in time. The time we have still to live is uncertain, and will pass like an arrow shot from a bow. God has appointed the moment of our death as the end of our time. The sinner in hell hates God, curses, blasphemes, and commits other sins; yet his torments are not increased on that account, because he has reached the term of time during which he could merit punish-

ment by sin. A just soul in purgatory practises the most perfect faith and hope regarding the joys of heaven it has not yet seen; it hopes for salvation as firmly as if it had already gained it; it loves God above all things, although it feels the weight of his chastising hand; it is fully resigned to God's will in its severe torments; yet by all those virtues which it practises every moment it does not lessen or shorten its punishment, nor bring itself a step nearer to heaven. Why? Because it has already passed the term during which it could merit. "The dead know nothing more; neither have they a reward any more" (Eccles. 9 : 5). They receive their reward of what they have done during life, and it is according to that that God will pay them. But they have no further reward to expect for what they do after death. Hence, as our merits shall be in the last moments of our lives, so also shall our reward be; and after that moment we shall not have another to make a good confession, to awaken sorrow for our sins, to gain an indulgence or to acquire grace. If an angel were to come and tell us the day of our death, saying to each one in particular: you have still a year to live; you, half a year; you, three months; you, four weeks; you, five days; after that time shall be no more; how should we act during that time? How carefully we should purify our conscience, if it accused us of any sin! How we should avoid all dangerous occasions! How diligently we should perform the duties of our state! In a word, how zealous we should become in the divine service! Why do we not do all this now, since we are not sure of a single moment in the day? Why do we put off our conversion to a future time, which perhaps we shall never see?

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF DEATH.

"*For he was at the point of death.*"—John 4 : 47.

Even rich people must die. Even kings and princes must die. Even young people must die. He of whom the Gospel says that he was at the point of death was the young son of a ruler. Who is, then, free from death? Not one in the whole world. "It is appointed unto all men once to die;" the sentence is certain that he is already on the way, that we must die, and that, too, but once. When shall we die? That is known to God alone, who has fixed the last hour for each one. What follows from this? That he who wishes to die well must be always prepared for death.

It is uncertain when death will come; therefore if we love our salvation we should always be ready and prepared for it.

The servant who knows not when his master will return from a journey must be always ready to receive him. So we must be ready for the coming of our Lord at the hour of death. It is certain that he is already on the way, that we must die, and that the longer we have lived the nearer our death is; but at what time will he come? In what year shall we die? This year, or next? In what month, week, day, hour, moment? No man can tell us that, because no man knows it. Meanwhile we have received a message regarding this matter, delivered by infallible Truth itself. What is that message? You have often heard it; listen to it again: "Watch ye, therefore, because you

know not what hour your Lord will come" (Matt. 24 : 42). And lest it should appear that this warning was given only to his Apostles he adds: "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch" (Mark 13 : 37). The warning is given to all men; no one, no matter who he is, knows anything of the day, the hour, or the moment when I will come to call him. "But of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven" (Mark 13 : 32.

Since we can die but once, and on the last moment depends our happiness or misery for all eternity, it follows that we must use all diligence to be prepared for this last moment so as to die well; in the same way it follows from this truth that, since we know not when the last moment will come, we should be ready for it all the time of our lives, and therefore that it is the greatest folly to be unprepared and in the state of sin even for a single moment, because that very moment may be our last. Would you, in your present state, be ready to open the door to the Lord if he should knock, and to travel with him into eternity? Let each one consider his own case and ask himself: am I now ready to die? Reflect a little. . . . If not, why then do you not at once remove the obstacle out of the way, and place your soul in safety? For you can never be sure of the hour at which our Lord will come. Do you dare, oh, unjust man, to await the coming of death, while you still have in your possession that which you obtained by dishonest means? Truly not! Why, then, should you be so foolhardy as to keep those ill-gotten goods, I will not say an hour, but years and years? Would you, oh, vindictive man! wish to die in the moment when your heart is full of bitterness and hatred, anger, and revenge, and your mouth with curses, oaths, and imprecations against your neighbor and your whole idea is to have satisfaction from him who, as you imagine, has injured you? Oh, no, indeed! And why do you not then at once begin, according to the Christian law, to pardon your neighbor from your heart, to be recon-

ciled to him, and to give up the abominable habit of cursing? Would you, oh, drunkard! wish to die when you come home completely intoxicated, and ill-treat and tyrranize over your poor wife as if she were a dog?

If you received a certain message from heaven telling you that you were to die to-morrow, or in a week, nay, even in a month, would you wait long before preparing yourself for death and freeing your conscience from sin? My opinion is that you would begin at once to settle accounts with your Judge and to lead, for the rest of the time that is given you, a pious, holy life, so that you may not be lost, but may be happy with God forever in heaven. And yet you continue to sin, and intend to remain in the state of sin, although perhaps not a month, nor a week, nor a day, but only a few minutes of life remain to you. Imagine you are now on a bed of sickness; the doctors have given you up and say that you must certainly die in four hours unless a miracle is wrought in your favor; how would you spend those last hours? There is not a doubt that you would look after the interests of your soul, that you would receive the last Sacraments at once, make your will, and do all in your power to prepare for eternity. And why? Because you know that you must die in four hours, that it is all over with you, and that death is at hand. Now, how many sick people are there not, who according to the doctors were bound to die, and yet recovered and are still alive? Cases of the kind are countless. How many, on the other hand, have preserved their lives contrary to the declaration of God and of our faith? Not one. What do God and faith say? That you must die at an hour you know not; He does not fix for you four hours, like the doctors, but one hour, nay, one moment, and you know not when that shall come. If you believe the doctor when he tells you that you have four hours to live, and on the strength of his opinion prepare so carefully for death, why are you so negligent in preparing when God does not promise you even one hour of

life? Faith tells you that you cannot be safe from death for a single moment. How, then, can you dare to continue living in sin as you have heretofore lived? How can you be so presumptuous as to remain for one hour in the state of sin and yet expect to go to heaven?

But, you will say: It is true that the hour and moment of death are uncertain; still people do not die without having some warning of their approaching end. Experience tells us that many thousands live in sin till their old age, and yet they are converted at last. Sudden death is the exception; most people die after an illness, and they can make their confession and reconcile themselves with God, and thus die fortified with the holy Sacraments. So, I trust, it will be with me, and therefore I am not under the necessity of living in fear and dread all my life. Is that really possible? Christians, what are you thinking of?

Many men sin, and are converted afterwards, you say; and you are right. That may be the case with me, you infer. It may be, but also it may not be; it is uncertain. Many die in old age; that is true. But still a greater number die before old age; and that is true also. Perhaps I shall live to be an old man, and then lead a holy life. Perhaps, and perhaps not. Who has told you that? Most people get sick first, and are warned of the approach of death by their sickness, so that they can prepare; I hope for a similar chance. You hope for it; but you may be disappointed! How many people there are who die a sudden and unprovided death? Many young and healthy people whose last thought was death, have thus left the world and gone to eternal ruin, because it never entered thir heads to be reconciled with God. Almost every day you read or hear something of this kind; so-and-so was carried off by a stroke of apoplexy; another was shot by accident; a third was struck by lightning; a fourth was drowned; a fifth was killed by a collision on the railroad; a sixth by the trolley cars. Do you

think that God will let you know the day of your death a long time beforehand, so that you may continue offending him by sin until the last moment, and then recover his friendship by a tardy repentance?

Sinner! if death came to you now—and that is quite possible —what would become of you? Oh, if he comes, let him come! I must only have patience. Patience? If death surprises you in the state of sin and you die impenitent, will you suffer that patiently? If he hurls you into the depths of hell, will you suffer that patiently? If you have to weep and howl and gnash your teeth, curse God and yourself, and burn in that lake of fire forever, will you suffer that patiently? Will you then commit your fate and fortunes to such a blind and uncertain chance? You would not lend your money to any one of whom you could say: perhaps he may give it back to me. Before parting with it you must have some surety that it will be returned. You would not venture your life in a leaky vessel, of which you could say: perhaps she may make the voyage in safety; but you would seek out the strongest and safest ship. And yet, foolish man that you are! you intrust your soul and its salvation to such an uncertainty!

For the sake of your souls, think often and deeply of this truth: I shall die but once. There is but one moment in which I shall die; on that moment depends my salvation or damnation. It is absolutely uncertain when that moment will come; it may come to-day, this very hour, nay, at once. Therefore I will be always ready to die; therefore I will not remain a minute in a state in which I should be afraid to be surprised by death. I do not mean that we should always live in a state of fear, dread and melancholy. No, that is by no means necessary. To be joyful in the Lord, cheerful, and good-humored harmonizes easily with the meditation on death, provided we are only firmly resolved not to commit a grievous sin, or if we should commit one, not to remain long in the state of sin. He

who lives in that way need not fear death, since he is always ready for it; and no man on earth has greater cause to rejoice at heart than he whose conscience gives him this testimony: if death were now to come and hurry me off into eternity I should be prepared for it.

If, then, you find anything on your conscience that troubles it, say to yourself what Eliezer, the faithful servant of Abraham, said when he went to bring home Rebecca, the bride of Isaac. He had come to the house of the bride weary and tired, hungry and thirsty, and was at once invited by her parents to sit down to eat. No, said he: "I will not eat till I tell my message" (Gen. 24 : 33). But rest a little first, and take some refreshment; then we shall hear what you have to say. No, I cannot do that, nor taste a single mouthful, nor drink, nor sleep, until I have done what I am sent for; the business for which I have come is the most important thing and must be attended to first. In the same manner you must in future take to heart the affair of your salvation, and say and think to yourself: "I will not eat till I tell my message." I will not eat or drink until I have opened my mouth to disclose the sins I have committed and till I repent of them. I will not eat till I have made restitution for my neighbor's injured honor or property. I will not eat till I have been reconciled to my enemy and made friendship with him. I will give myself no rest till I shall have begun to lead a better life. In a word, I am in earnest about dying a happy death and going to heaven; and therefore I am determined never to consent to mortal sin for a single moment for the sake of any man, or thing, or pleasure, and so to live in future that in the supreme hour, when and wherever it may come, I may be amongst the number of those of whom Christ says: "Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching" (Luke 12 : 27).

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

PURGATORY AFTER DEATH.

"And his lord being angry delivered him to the torturers, until he paid all the debt."—Matt. 18: 34.

What a hard sentence for that servant! Yet it was a merciful punishment for that merciless, ungrateful man, who deserved to be treated with far greater severity, for though he was to be punished, yet it was only until he should pay the whole debt. Hence this punishment was not to last always, but till he should have paid all he owed his lord. Thus he had the hope of being one day freed from prison and torture. Here we have a vivid picture of the prison which we Catholics call Purgatory, in which the souls of those who have not sufficiently satisfied the justice of God for their sins are confined, that they may be tortured, not forever, but only for a time and until they have completely paid all they owe the divine justice. Each one of us should think, how will it be with me after death? Shall I be immediately translated into heaven, or shall I be sent to the prison of Purgatory to be tormented? In all probability the latter will be the case. This thought should urge us to do all we can to help the Poor Souls, who are actually there now.

I. Every one of us has just reason to fear a severe punishment after death.

II. Every one of us should show mercy to the Poor Souls; because they who refuse to do so may expect a Purgatory without mercy.

I. There is no one who does not daily do something to earn purgatory; for what are we, and where are we now on this earth? Poor, frail mortals, inclined to evil, exposed to countless dangers and occasions of sin, nay, we stain our lives with many actual sins and faults; for we are of the number of those of whom St. John says: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1 : 8). In truth if we go through the whole day, from morning till night, we shall hardly find a quarter of an hour that is quite free from some fault or another. Curiosity of eyes and ears, sensuality of taste and touch, want of restraint over the tongue, idle, flattering, lying, fault-finding, quarrelsome, sarcastic, contradictory talk; proud, ambitious, suspicious, impure thoughts, that are fully or half deliberate; intemperance in eating, drinking, and sleep; discontent and impatience in adversity; a wrong intention in outward actions; vanity in dress, manners, and demeanor; want of restraint and consideration in company; human respect, that drives us to do or omit what we should not do or omit; useless squandering of precious time, culpable ignorance, neglecting the duties of our state although in small things; not fulfilling the obligations of Christian charity; leading others into sin, giving scandal through carelessness, rejecting the divine inspirations, etc. These are small things according to our ideas; but our lives are filled with them; they are as it were the daily bread of even pious Christians. Wherever one turns he finds some fault or other that he has committed. And how many sins do we not commit that escape our notice, that we do not acknowledge and are not aware of, although they are all clearly recognized by the all-seeing eye of God and written down in the great account-book in their minutest details. Even our good works will be found to be mixed with faults and imperfections. Prayer said with fully or half deliberate distractions; devotions performed with coldness and tepidity; hearing Mass, and receiving holy Communion with

little reverence, or fervor; these pious exercises that we daily perform to honor God, to increase our merit, and to gain heaven— these very works serve at the same time to fan the flames of purgatory in order to chastise us.

I will say nothing of the grievous sins that are committed from the first dawn of reason, through the succeeding years of youth and manhood; sins of all kinds in thought and desire, in word, and act, and conversation, and omission. How many adults are there who can say that they are of the number of those happy souls who have never been guilty of a mortal sin in their lives? I will suppose that we have blotted out of the book of God's justice all the mortal sins of our past lives, so that we are now admitted to the favor and friendship of God. What becomes of the terrible temporal punishment we still owe the divine justice for those sins that we have committed and repented of?

The God of holiness and justice requires for these and even for the small daily faults we fall into, the most complete and perfect satisfaction, and no fault is so small as not to deserve its punishment. If we do not make this atonement during life, we must atone for those sins in the next life by suffering in our own persons and by purgatorial punishment. For no one can be admitted into heaven and to the sight of God who is not perfectly free from even the least stain. Alas! what will become of us? Is there any one who will dare to say that he shall escape purgatory?

And what do we imagine we shall have to suffer for those almost countless sins and faults? Do we think they are but small matters, and that God does not consider them so exactly? Ah, no! The God of mercy and goodness, even in this life, where mercy holds the foremost rank, where punishments willingly endured are united with the infinite merits of the Passion and death of our Lord, and therefore have a great atoning power over and above their own merit—even in this life God

has sometimes punished most severely small sins committed by his faithful servants. Thus, for instance, the half deliberate doubt on the part of Moses, who hesitated about striking the rock with his rod, was the cause of his being excluded from the promised land; an act of curiosity on the part of Lot's wife, who looked round to see the burning city of Sodom, was enough to cause her to be turned into a pillar of salt. The carelessness of Oza in putting forth his hand to support the ark of the covenant drew down on him the punishment of a sudden death. The silly vanity of David, who wished to know the number of his people, brought the plague amongst them, which in three days carried off seventy thousand men. Now, I say, if God, who is otherwise so merciful, inflicts such severe punishments on even his faithful servants for small faults, alas! how strict will he be in the next life, where his justice alone, untempered by mercy, shall wield the rod? where suffering is not united with the merits of Christ, but is simply endured by a mere creature, a suffering that, no matter how keen it is, can hardly be compared to an offence offered to God.

For that very reason we should be more active in helping the Poor Souls, for they who show no mercy to them shall be punished without mercy in purgatory. "For with the same measure," says Christ, "that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6 : 38). If you have shown no charity towards the suffering souls, there will be no one after your death who will think of showing mercy to you. There are many examples to prove this. We read of souls that have been over a hundred years in Purgatory and had not one to pray for them, and that through a most just decree of God; and of souls for whom many prayers and masses were offered without doing them any good, because they had not helped the Poor Souls during their lives. Remember this: Not every good act that is done for the benefit of a certain soul actually helps that soul, otherwise the rich, and especially kings

and princes, would be well off indeed, for sometimes a thousand masses are said for them. Ah, no! quite different is the distribution made by the justice of God, who is not bound to accept the payment offered by a stranger for the debt contracted by any soul. You, he will say, who during your life did so little for the Poor Souls, you do not deserve this mass, this alms, those prayers that your friends are now sending after you; all these things shall be given over to others who are more deserving of them on account of the charity they practised during their lives; but you must pay at your own cost the debts you have incurred.

It is related of a soldier who on his death-bed asked his grandson to sell his horse, and have masses said with the money for the repose of his soul. The grandson, partly through neglect and partly because he wished to keep the horse for himself, as it was a fine one, did not fulfil his grandfather's request. After a lapse of six months the deceased appeared to him; "you faithless fellow," he said to him with an angry countenance, "on account of your negligence I have had to suffer in Purgatory all this time, and now the mercy of God has caused me to find help elsewhere. But as for you, by a just decree you will die soon, and your soul will come to this place of torments, where it will suffer until you have atoned, not only for your own sins, but also for mine, for you will have to complete the punishment that I should have suffered, if God's mercy had not found means to help me." This threat was fulfilled to the letter; the grandson died soon after. This should be a lesson to those children and heirs who neglect to carry out the pious wishes of their deceased friends, or for some cause or another defer complying with them. In the same measure will chastisement be measured out to them. "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy" (James 2 : 13); Purgatory without mercy to him who has not shown mercy to the Poor Souls.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

DEATH WILL COME UNEXPECTEDLY.

"That you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of justice."—Phil. 1 : 10-11.

St. Paul has left us a beautiful exhortation in those words: "This I pray, that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all understanding." To what end? "That you may be sincere and without offence unto the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of justice." "Unto the day of Christ;" that is, the day when our Lord will come to take us from this world by death. It is certain that the Lord will come to take each of us from the world by death; and therefore we must all prepare in time for his coming, for much depends on it. It is certain that he will come but once; therefore we must prepare with great care, so that that one occasion may be fortunate for us. It is certain that we do not know the time at which this one coming of the Lord will occur; therefore we must be always ready for it. And he will come not only at a time that is unknown to us, but also when we least expect him and are least thinking of his coming; or:

I. We shall die at the hour when we least expect it.

II. We must use all diligence to be always prepared for death.

I. We must die, and, generally speaking, when we least expect. A few Saints who were always resigned to the will of God and prepared for death, and criminals led forth to the place

of execution, excepted, there is hardly one who dies but at a time when he thinks he shall not die. This is a truth taught by daily experience, and by the inspired word of God. "Be you then also ready, for at what hour you think not the Son of man will come;" therefore he will come at a time when he is not looked for. Our Lord's whole wish was to impress this truth as deeply as possible on our minds; for he repeats the warning so often, partly by himself, partly by his apostles and disciples: "Take ye heed, watch and pray "(Mark 13 : 33). "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and the cares of this life: and that day come upon you suddenly" (Luke 21 : 34): lest it come upon you when you think it far off. "Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands" (Luke 12 : 35).

Hence the Lord sometimes compares death to a thief. "The day of the Lord shall so come as a thief in the night" (1 Thes. 5 : 2). No thief is so daring as to venture to attempt a robbery in a place that he knows to be well guarded. If he sees the owner of the house on watch at the door as he is passing by, he salutes him as if they were old friends, and says to himself: there is no use in trying to steal anything there; the people are on their guard. But when all the household is sunk in sleep, not suspecting any danger, then is the thief's opportunity; then without making a noise he breaks through the wall, or the window, slips into the house and brings away all that he can lay hands on, and when the master of the house awakes in the morning he finds that he has been robbed. "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief in the night." He will steal in when a man is least on his guard and take away his life when he was still in hopes of living for a long time. Sometimes death is compared to a butcher: "I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter" (Jer. 41 : 40); they will be merry and joyful in their prosperity, and live without forethought, nor will they be aware that death has already sharpened his knife to pierce their hearts

in a short time. Sometimes he is compared to a fisherman and to a fowler: "Man knoweth not his own end—but as fishes are taken with the hook, and as birds are caught with the snare, so men are taken in the evil time, when it shall suddenly come upon them" (Eccles. 9 : 12). The fish snaps greedily at the bait, the bird at the corn spread for it. Why? They wish to enjoy the food prepared for them, in order to preserve their lives. Meanwhile the one swallows the hook with the bait, and the other is caught in the net while eating the corn. Thus both find death where they expected to find pleasure and the means of prolonging their lives. "So men are taken in the evil time;" so it is with us; when we think we are benefiting our health and lengthening our lives, we are hurried off by a sudden and unforeseen death.

This is the hour in which Balthasar, who seemed so happy in the midst of his riches and pleasures, read that terrible sentence that he was so far from expecting, which put an end to his life and kingdom. This is the hour in which the proud Aman, before he had time to look around, was hurled from the highest pinnacle of honor, and hanged on a gallows. This is the hour in which Holofernes was killed by a woman in his sleep on his own bed. This is the hour in which Sisara, also during his sleep, was slain by having a nail driven through his head. This is the hour in which Pharao was drowned in the Red Sea, Absalom pierced to the heart as he hung on a tree, Amnon murdered as he was carousing at table. But what is the use of raking up mouldering bones, and seeking for examples from ancient times? Look at the world of our own days, consider the dying of whatever age and condition they may be; few of them, nay, hardly one of them but is surprised by death in some way or other, and dies at a time when he thought he would live longer.

One can die in childhood or youth, or in the prime of life, or in old age. Children often die when neither they themselves

nor any one else expects. If a man dies in the prime of life, at thirty or forty, who would have thought of it? they say of him. He was so strong and healthy; and now he is dead! Yes, indeed, he is dead; although neither he himself nor any one else expected it. How many old people are there to whom one dares not speak of death for fear of annoying them? And the older they get the more confidence they have of living for a long time. Even the oldest think they have still a year of life left; and nothing will persuade them that the year they have begun may be the last for them. There is no one so old who does not promise himself another year of life. And then there are those who die after a long and tedious illness. Most of those even die when they least expect it. For show me, if you can, one sick person who, no matter how bad he is, does not at least hope for another day of life? How many sick people are not deceived by their own children, domestics, and friends, who are unwilling to speak a word to them of any danger of death for fear of troubling them? Every one who visits them tries to encourage them; you must hope for the best, they say; there have been many far worse who have pulled through all right; you must not be anxious; the doctor is a clever man, and he will surely be able to help you. Is it not so? And how often are sick people only too ready to believe such flattering suggestions, since they have *a natural love of life and fear of death*, and thus put off receiving the last Sacraments until they are at the last gasp?

II. It is, then, and remains true that the Lord will come when we know not, and that we shall die at a time when we expect not. "At what hour you think not the Son of man will come." What follows from this? That we must be always prepared for death. Unhappy sinners who neglect this; who, unarmed and unprepared, spend whole years as carelessly as if they were never to die. Therefore they remain in the proxi-

mate occasion of sin; therefore they refuse to restore ill-gotten goods; therefore they put off doing penance; therefore they are tepid and cold in the divine service; all because they imagine that the hour of death is still far from them.

How happy are just and pious Christians in this respect! How peacefully they can sleep at night! How joyfully they can go through their day's work! For they always have a good conscience and bear about with them sanctifying grace and the friendship of God. Death may come upon them in public or private; he can do them no harm, but rather good; and whether they die suddenly or after a long illness they are never taken unprepared, and therefore they need never fear death. Even holy servants of God have died suddenly when they did not expect death; but their deaths were not on that account unhappy, but rather holy. There is a difference between an unforeseen and an unprovided death; the latter is bad, but the former is not always so. What a difference there was between the five wise and the five foolish virgins! Yet the former, as well as the latter, slept when the bridegroom came. "They all slumbered and slept" (Matt. 25 : 5). The sole reason why the former were admitted to the nuptials and the latter excluded was that the wise virgins had their lamps well provided with oil when the bridegroom came unexpectedly, whilst the five foolish virgins had to go to buy oil. Once for all, he who is not at all times and in all places ready and prepared with a conscience adorned by sanctifying grace has reason to dread lest death should surprise him at any moment and hurry him into an unhappy eternity. Once for all, he who leads a good, Christian life need not fear death at any moment. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Apoc. 14 : 13). Say to yourselves: alas! unhappy me! if I am but a moment too late with my conversion! Therefore I will delay no longer. Now I will begin with God's help and grace, that during the rest of my life I may serve him truly, and die a happy death. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE UNHAPPY DEATH OF THE WICKED.

"*My daughter is even now dead.*—Matt. 9: 18."

Who would have thought that this maiden should have been hurried off so soon by death in the bloom of youth? Certainly neither her father nor she herself would have imagined such a thing; and yet she died. So true are the words: "At what hour you think not the Son of man will come" (Luke 12 : 40). He will come when we least expect. Yet this death was in some respects consoling for the father, because he had at hand Christ the Son of God, from whom he might seek help and comfort; and fortunate for the innocent daughter, because she was immediately raised from the dead by the same Son of God and restored to life; and even if she had not been restored to life, her death would have been a happy one, since she departed in her first innocence. The death of the just, whether it comes early or late, suddenly or slowly, foreseen or unforeseen, is always a consoling and happy death; therefore the pious need not fear death, for they are always ready for it. But how will it be with sinners if they are called away without doing penance. The death of sinners and the wicked is full of woe and misery, without help or consolation,

I. From creatures;
II. From God.

I. In nearly all the sorrows of life some comfort and help may be found in creatures. 1. Nature has given every man a

voice, that he may at once call for help when he is in distress. If a child or an old man falls down in the street he calls out for help; if one is in danger of drowning he cries out for help. Fear and anguish are lessened when there is hope of aid. The first means of succor that nature has given to every one in sorrow is to seek consolation somewhere, either in his own thoughts, or in complaints and prayers addressed to others that they may assist him, or at least speak to him words of comfort. And many a one thinks he has got rid of half the load of his grief when he has revealed it to a good friend (Confession). If the father of a family dies, what an affliction for the children! yet they have the consolation of knowing that their mother is still left to them. (One eye, one arm, one foot.)

2. But the death of the unrepentant sinner is indeed the misery of all miseries, for he is surrounded by anguish on all sides, when he thinks of his friends. Then will be verified for him the words that the weeping Saviour spoke over the city of Jerusalem, alluding to its future destruction: "The days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side" (Luke 19 : 43). Wherever the unhappy man turns on his bed of death, he finds nothing but pain and sorrow. If he looks at his friends, oh, what grief! he has to part from them. Good-bye, father, he says with sorrowful heart; good-bye, mother, dear children, husband, wife, sister, brother! I have looked at you for the last time; in a few moments all love and friendship will be at an end between us, and that forever. For I am going to hell, and if you go to heaven, oh, what a great chaos will be fixed between me and you (Luke 16 : 26). Or if you follow me to hell, I am sure that we shall curse and revile each oth[illegible]ever with a bitter hatred.

3. If he thinks of the money and wealth that he heaped up with so much toil and labor, or of the pleasures that he still hoped to enjoy, or of the honorable position that made him a

great man in the eyes of the world; "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!" (Eccles. 41 : 1). And if the bare remembrance of it is a torment, what will it be when death really comes and takes him away from everything? I am now to be hunted out of house and home, he will say to himself with sorrow of heart; I am to be driven away from all I possess without the hope of ever coming back again, without being able to bring with me a single farthing of my wealth, a single rag of clothing! Bare and naked I am going into the home of eternal poverty, shame, hunger, and thirst!

4. But all this is nothing compared to the anguish, fear, and terror that fill his soul. According to the terrible words of St. Augustine, describing the state of a man dying in sin, wherever he turns he finds nothing but objects to increase his anguish and apprehension. "Over him is the angry Judge" who will condemn him; "below him the abyss of hell," ready to swallow him up; "on his right side are his sins which accuse him" and cry out for vengeance on him; "on his left are legions of demons waiting to drag him down into hell; inwardly he is tortured by the worm of conscience; outwardly by the death he cannot avoid. Where can he fly to out of all these miseries?"

5. How will he defend himself against the voice of his conscience, which represents to him in every detail and with the utmost clearness all his past sins, thus gnawing at his heart and oppressing him more than his sickness?

6. What anguish will be caused, too, by the demons standing round the dying man in troops, open-mouthed and with fangs whetted like those of ravening wolves, lying in wait for his poor

to hurry away with it the moment it leaves the body. Imagine a scene like this: In a forest two greyhounds were chasing a cat, that had tried to escape them by climbing a tree; the hunter, instead of shooting her, threw stones at her until he dislodged her; but she had not time to touch the ground; the

dogs had her in their teeth while she was still in the air. What terror shall invade the sinful soul when the angry Judge shall refuse to allow it any more time, and shall give it over to the hunter death, to be driven by him into the fangs of the hellish wolf! And what horror shall take possession of it when it sees hell open beneath, certain that it is to be its dwelling-place forever!

And is there then no help nor comfort for the unhappy man? Alas, no! He is most in need of help; but his misery is that of which the Psalmist says: "For tribulation is very near: for there is none to help me." Help him, you men and women for whose sake he has so often sinned and bartered heaven! But their answer resounds in the heart of the dying man in the terms in which the high-priests answered the despairing Judas: "What is that to us? look thou to it," we cannot help you. Husband, wife, father, mother, dear children, for whom I have worked so hard, to whom I have left all I had; help me! help me! What is the matter? Can we do anything for you? Shall we arrange the pillow under your head? Ah, no! no! take this load off my conscience! that is the rest I require. But we cannot do that; do you wish to have some strengthening medicine? Ah, I want comfort and strength for my poor soul! We cannot give you that. But the most terrible of all his woes is that the sinner shall be abandoned by God himself.

II. Suffering, no matter how great, is tolerable, nay, even grows sweet, when one has God as a Companion and Comforter. Such was the case with Job in his great affliction, David in the midst of his enemies, Daniel amongst the raging lions, Joseph in the hands of his brethren, Lazarus in his poverty, Paul in the most violent persecutions, Lawrence on the gridiron, the martyrs in their torments. What did their sufferings matter to them? All they had to do to comfort themselves was to remember the words of the

Lord: "I am with him in his trouble" (Ps. 90 : 15), and they were able to laugh and rejoice in the midst of their tortures. Say to some pious servant of God: your father, your mother, your friends have abandoned you; be it so, he will answer quite composedly: "the Lord hath taken me up" (Ps. 26 : 10), and that suffices for me. "Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death," he will think and say, "I will fear no evils: for Thou art with me" (Ps. 22 : 4). But to suffer without God, to endure anguish without God, to be in the hands of the devils without God; that is the greatest and most terrible of all suffering! The human mind can do without all created comfort, and without any help from creatures; but to be excluded from the comfort and help that God can give is that woe which the Lord threatens the people with by the prophet Osee: "Woe to them when I shall depart from them" (Osee 9 : 12).

Poor sinner on your death-bed! "where is your God?" Look around you; turn from one side to the other. Ah, he is not with you! He whom you have rejected during your life has now abandoned you and cast you off forever. If you hear his words in your heart, they will be only words of scorn and mocking laughter, with which he will rejoice at your misery, and mock your helplessness. You have neglected all my graces, inspirations, exhortations, patience, and mercy: "You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock, when that shall come to you which you feared." Cry out to heaven as loud as you please: O my God! O merciful God! in what a miserable state my soul is! Help, ah, help me, my God! What! your conscience will answer in his name, your God! Look for him in your coffers among your gold; that is the god you have adored; see that woman whom you have worshipped; that man whom you have served more zealously than me; those comrades of your debauchery, with whom you have

often mocked at holy things. What have I to do with you? What are you to me? Go to the goods and joys of earth, in which you have hitherto sought your pleasure. "Where are their gods, in whom they trusted? Let them arise and help you: and protect you in your distress" (Deut. 32 : 37, 38). Call on them to help you now; for you did not accept my aid when it was time to do so. Thus, not only is there no help or comfort from God for the dying sinner, but the very thought of God only makes his misery greater. He is abandoned by God and man, by all in heaven and on earth!

Be not frightened, pious Christians! I have been speaking only of one who is hardened in sin to the end, of the impenitent sinner, of the sinner on his death-bed. This subject is not for you, except to console you with the thought that if you continue to serve God faithfully you shall not have such a death to fear. Continue to serve God, and that with joyful hearts; you need not fear death, no matter how, when, or where he comes for you. "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Ps. 115 : 15); "With him that feareth the Lord it shall go well in the latter end, and in the day of his death he shall be blessed" (Eccles 1 : 13).

Sinners, it is to you that this sermon is chiefly directed, through sincere and well-meant love for your souls; not to drive you to despair, but to induce you to amend; not to announce to you such a terrible death, but to give you a paternal warning against it, while you still have time. Tell me, is it really your wish to die such an unhappy death? Do you indeed desire to go into eternity in that manner? Ah, if so, of what good to you is a handful of money, a bit of ground, a short-lived pleasure, a point of honor, or the joy you find in a creature? And that is all for which you abandon your God and commit sin. I ask you again: do you mean to die a bad death for such trumpery? No, you think; God forbid! Yes; but see how you are living; and as you live so you shall die, without the

least doubt. You are minded to amend before death; but when? After a time. Have you a document to show how long your time is to last? There are millions of souls in heaven who would not be there now if they had deferred their conversion ever so little. Millions of souls are burning in hell forever, because they have thought and acted as you do now, and have deferred repentance though only for one hour. Oh, how stupid we mortals are! We are certain that we have grievously sinned; we are certain that we have merited an eternal hell; we are certain that we must die; we are certain that we may die at any moment; we are certain that most people die unhappily; we are certain that the same fate may be ours this very night, this day, this hour even; and yet we remain for hours, days, weeks, years, in the state of sin, although if death surprises us in that state we shall be dragged down to hell by the demons!

Ah, sinner, if it were only probable that we should die, what depends on death is so weighty that it should be our greatest care not to die unhappily. If there were but one of us here in church who had such a death to fear, it would be reason enough to make us all shudder with terror, and to say to ourselves: perhaps it is I. O, sinner, do penance! penance! and do not delay about it, "for tribulation is very near." Well-known and remarkable is the picture of human life given us by St. John Damascene. A traveller, he says, runs as hard as he can off the road in pursuit of game into the desert. While running he falls into a trap covered with leaves, and as one naturally does when falling, he stretches out his hands, and happens to catch hold of a bush growing on the side of the hole. Meanwhile he sees at the bottom a terrible serpent, ready to devour him as soon as he falls. But the worst of all is that two mice, one white, the other black, are gnawing at the weak roots of the bush he is holding. What his thoughts are likely to be in those circumstances is easy to imagine. O sinner! such is the state in which we all are. Death is the poisonous serpent that awaits us in the grave; the

weak thread of our life is the only thing that supports us; at this thread are constantly gnawing two mice, one black and the other white; that is, day and night: the past night has already gnawed away its part, and the thread is so much eaten away. Who knows how long they still have to gnaw? Who can know it? Perhaps this very evening they may have finished with you or me; and woe then to him who falls, not merely into the jaws of death, but into the abyss of hell! "Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13 : 5).

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE COMING AND THE CRUELTY OF ANTICHRIST.

"*And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light.*"—Matt. 24 : 24.

Terrible shall be the signs, the forerunners of the day of general judgment, the last day of the world. Some are to appear a long time beforehand, such as the destruction of the Jewish nation: a people now without faith or king or country: the conversion of the heathen to the true religion, the persecutions of the church. And besides these we have seen wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, the increase of wickedness and sin, men growing cold in the love of God, the want of reverence towards God in the churches and towards priests and spiritual superiors. All these are signs of the approaching end of the world and the terrible day of judgment. These signs are the sickness of the earth which is to precede its death; because we are in the dying moments of the world, certain sicknesses of the

world must go before. By these things God reminds us that it is approaching the end, so that we may not become too attached to it, too fond of it. Other signs of the coming of the last day are the advent of the Antichrist and the terrible portents in the sun, moon, and stars, and the distress of all nations on earth. To-day I shall speak of the coming and the tyranny of Antichrist.

I. Who is antichrist and what has he to do in the world?
II. What should be our thoughts regarding this?

Who is Antichrist? Of what nature shall he be? In the Scripture the Holy Ghost never gives him a proper name, because he did not wish to mention the name of such a wicked man; therefore he calls him only Antichrist, that is, one who is opposed to Christ in everything. Daniel names him a "beast, terrible and wonderful, and exceeding strong" (Dan. 7 : 7). St. Paul calls him a man of sin, made up, as it were, of vice and wickedness: "The man of sin, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2 : 3). In any case he will be a man of the same nature as we, created by God for the same end, and he shall also have sufficient graces and means given to him to save his soul, if he only chooses to make use of them. This wicked man is to be the offspring of adulterous intercourse, to be born in the Jewish tribe of Dan at Babylon and to be secretly brought up by people of the lowest kind: sorcerers and witches. It is easy to imagine the kind of training he is likely to get from such teachers.

When he comes to man's estate he will at first conceal his wickedness and craft under a mask of hypocrisy and apparent sanctity; he will be very zealous for the law of Moses, and pretend to despise all earthly things; to be an enemy of idolatry and a lover of the Sacred Scriptures. Although he will privately wallow in all kinds of impurity, he will outwardly condemn adultery and decry it as most criminal; he will be very charitable to the poor; in a word, he will put on such an ap-

pearance of virtue that many nations shall desire to have him as their king. He will draw the Jews to his side in crowds, and they will soon look on him and adore him as their long-expected Messias, when they see that he is a sworn enemy of Christ and the Christian law and an upholder of the Jewish law and its ceremonies, and moreover that they can hope to profit by having him in power.

When he shall thus have raised himself to a high position in the world and secured a great number of followers, then this wicked serpent shall commence to spit out his poison and to spread his authority over the world by craft, promises, and force of arms. Besides Turks, heathens, and Jews, he will attract to his standard and subject to his authority countless numbers of Christians. That he will effect first by the riches, honors, dignities and sensual delights that he will place in the power of all his followers, as Daniel says of him: "He shall increase glory and shall give them power over many, and shall divide the land for nothing" (Dan. 11 : 39). For besides the immense revenues he shall have from conquered countries, the devil with the divine permission shall discover to him mines of gold and silver, and treasures hidden in the sea: "And he shall have power over the treasures of gold, and of silver, and all the precious things" (Dan. 11 : 43). Alas! what an attractive bait that will be to ensnare the vain, ambitious, and greedy children of the world, who are already only too willing to grasp such things! How will they be able to withstand this seductive and powerful temptation?

But when Antichrist finds virtuous souls who will not allow themselves to be turned aside from the love of God by promises, flattery, caresses, money, honors, or pleasures, then he will use against them another terrible weapon, namely, tortures such as the most cruel tyrant has never yet even thought of. "For there shall be then great tribulation," says our Lord of him in the Gospel, "such as hath not been from the beginning of the

world until now, neither shall be" (Matt. 24 : 21). So that even many just and pious servants of God shall yield under the pressure of tortures and deny their God. "And it was given unto him to make war with the Saints, and to overcome them. And power was given him over every tribe, and people, and tongue, and nation" (Apoc. 13 : 7). So that he will overcome even the Saints, some according to the body by martyrdom and torturing and putting them to death; and others, which is far more deplorable, according to the soul, by forcing them with cruel torments to deny Jesus Christ and his faith. There will be no choice left between enduring intolerable torture and falling away from the true religion, or else perishing with hunger and want in caverns and deserts.

All that should encourage a pious Christian and console him in such tribulations shall then be removed; for this cruel beast in his daring pride shall set himself up as the true God and claim to be adored and to have churches built in his honor. "And the king shall do according to his will, and he shall be lifted up, and shall magnify himself against every god" (Dan. 11 : 36). All the temples consecrated to our Lord shall be pulled down and desecrated, the sacred images destroyed, spiritual books burned, all priests made away with, and the use of the holy Sacraments and the celebration of Mass utterly abolished. Thus for about four years, the duration of the reign of Antichrist, the public celebration of the holy Sacrifice shall be nowhere tolerated in the whole world; not a single crucifix shall there be that one might comfort himself in his sorrows by looking at it. He will give his followers another sign, which they are to wear on their foreheads or on their right hands, and a man who has not that sign may not buy or sell the least thing, or do any business whatever; and the sign shall be the blasphemous words: Nego Jesum ("I deny Jesus").

And this shall be the case especially when Antichrist shall have recourse to the third and most powerful means he is to use

to confirm his false doctrine; for, as St. John testifies of him, he shall by means of witchcraft and sorcery perform countless apparent miracles and wonders. Our Lord has foretold that already: "For there shall rise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders" (Matt. 24 : 24). Alas! how many souls shall be misled when this great and mighty monarch, so powerful in the eyes of the world, shall in the presence of Christians cleanse lepers, heal the paralytic, free those possessed by the devil, and even apparently raise the dead to life, and when all these cured by him shall adore him as the true God! How will it be when he commands the sun in the heavens to stand still, and it will obey his command? When he calls forth storms from the sea, and quiets them again? When he shall cause dumb beasts, infant children, nay, even lifeless images to cry out that all that Jesus Christ has taught is false, that he is not the Son of God, but a traitor who is damned forever? When he shall call down fire from heaven to consume those who oppose him, or to burn sacrifices in his honor, or to give his disciples fiery tongues, so that they can speak all languages? How will it be when he shall appear to die and to come to life again in three days, and afterwards be carried by the demons heavenwards in the air? How will it be when the legions of those demons disguised as angels of light shall assist and serve him in visible form, and sing hymns of praise in his honor, as if he were the true God and promised Saviour of the world? Thus shall Antichrist draw to his side almost all the world: the wicked and tepid by riches, honors, and pleasures; the pious and God-fearing by the intolerable torments he will inflict on them; the simple and incautious by the wonderful signs and prodigies he shall perform. "And unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved" (Matt. 24 : 24). Three years and a half shall his reign last, after which this cruel man shall raise himself up in the air from Mount Olivet towards heaven, and there our Lord shall strike him with lightning, or

shall by his mere voice hurl him down to earth and thence body and soul into the abyss of hell. "And then," says St. Paul, "that wicked one shall be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus shall kill with the spirit of his mouth" (2 Thess. 2 : 8). There you have a short description of Antichrist as a forerunner of the last terrible day of judgment. What lesson should we draw from it for the good of our souls?

II. What would you think if Antichrist were to be born soon, so that we should live in his time? For no man knows when that time is to come, as God has reserved the knowledge of it to himself alone. Let us at all events imagine that the cruel man is really in the world, and that we hear and see all that has been said about him; what should we do? Should we dare to renounce Christ and to side with that monster? Should we allow ourselves to be marked with that odious sign: "I deny Christ"? What! each one of you will say, deny Christ? Side with the demons? God forbid that I should think of such a thing! I would rather die a thousand deaths than be untrue to my Saviour and God, or abjure his faith, in which alone salvation is to be found! I would laugh at the pretended miracles, and trample on the proffered delights of the flesh, the honors, and riches; I would heroically resist the tortures, no matter how terrible; all this I would readily do in order not to lose my one immortal soul and the eternal joys of heaven. Oh, truly, that is a beautiful and Christian resolution! And such should be the determination of each one of us even under such terrible circumstances.

But, alas! poor mortals that we are with all our resolutions and professions! It is easy for us to say that we would trample on the proffered riches, honors, and pleasures. Now, while we are living in peace and quietness and have every opportunity of considering the matter duly, the least temptation is often enough to make us transgress most shamefully and renounce the friendship of the God who is so worthy of our love. How

then can we dare to say that we should be strong enough to resist the attacks of such a monster? Even now, although we learn by daily experience the transitory nature of earthly things, and how soon and easily we can lose them, we are sometimes so beset by the passion of avarice that we sell our souls and our salvation for a miserable coin, and when our conscience or the thought of losing our souls trouble us, we dispatch such thoughts by saying to ourselves: what matter how the money is made as long as I succeed in making it! How then could we hope to be able to trample riches underfoot if they were offered to us in abundance?

It is easy to say that we should laugh at hypocrisy, false doctrine, and pretended miracles. Even now, while we have at hand countless opportunities of doing good, invited as we are to be zealous in the service of God by so many public devotions, having it in our power to frequent the Sacraments almost daily, to cleanse our souls from sin in the sacred tribunal, to feed them with the body and blood of Jesus Christ; having our ignorance enlightened by so many sermons which encourage us to good, warn us against evil, exhort us to avoid the occasions of sin and the evil customs and usages of the world; with all this we still remain so tepid and cold in the divine service, so obstinate in the habits we have once acquired, that sometimes we even attach but little credence to the word of God, or at all events believe no more of it than suits our fancies. What the corrupt world preaches, what we learn from the example of others, what idle people say to us, that must always be true, valid, and lawful; to it must yield the maxims and infallible teachings of the holy Gospel. If we see one who has the name of being pious, of conforming to the customs of the world, we say at once: oh, there can be no harm in it, since such a one does it! So, I repeat, we act in the full light of day. What then should we not do when the use of the Sacraments is abolished, public devotions prevented, sermons and instructions prohib-

ited, and in the midst of general corruption and perversion, a new law promulgated to flatter our sensuality and pride, and that, too, confirmed by miracles and supported by a false appearance of godliness and by the approval of the whole world?

It is easy to talk of resisting torments and braving martyrdom! Ah! how could they give up their bodies to the rods, the scorpions, the leaded clubs, the iron hooks, or to be torn and flayed, who are now so delicate and tender that they cannot bear the prick of a needle; who find a fast-day intolerable, and are absolutely unable to stand or kneel for an hour in church, or to rise early in the morning on account of the cold? How could they allow themselves to be roasted or boiled alive who, if their beds are the least uncomfortable, cannot sleep for impatience? How could they laugh at torments to whom all crosses are terrible, who sigh and moan at the least trial, and give vent to their feelings in oaths and curses at the most trifling annoyance, expressing their dissatisfaction also by giving up the practice of prayer and devotion and the frequentation of the Sacraments? Oh, no! God of goodness! we are not in want of an Antichrist to prove our virtue, our faith, hope and charity by putting us to the torture! We have daily tribulations enough: more than we wish for, to try our virtue! Would that we could only bear them with patience and resignation for thy sake and to gain heaven! Every hour of the day we have abundant opportunity of mortifying our eyes, ears, tongue, sensuality, and evil inclinations; but to do so is often for us a bitter martyrdom that, without any tyrant to compel us, causes us to forget the obedience we owe God's holy law. A word of contradiction, a cross look is sometimes enough to upset our so-called virtue, and change it into impatience, hatred, and anger. What would then become of us in the midst of a terrible persecution, which many even of the holiest and most innocent shall not withstand?

Finally, it is easy to say that we should prefer rather to die a

thousand deaths than deny Christ and take sides with his wicked enemy! Already most men are on the side of Antichrist against Jesus, our Saviour. Hear what St. John says: "Every spirit that dissolveth Jesus is not of God, and this is Antichrist, of whom you have heard that he cometh, and he is now already in the world." Not in person, but in spirit; that is, in his precursors. If you look into the matter you will find not one, but many Antichrists. Are not those parents Antichrists, that is, against Christ, who allow their children all license, bring them up to the vanity and filthy pride of the world, to idleness, and keep them from the zealous love of God and true devotion? Is he not an Antichrist who, contrary to the law of God, cherishes revenge against his neighbor and frequents the dangers and occasions of sin? Is he not an Antichrist who tries to lead a maiden astray from the path of virtue by presents and money? Is not that woman an Antichrist who by indecency in dress and dissolute manners leads others into sin? Is he not an Antichrist who gives scandal by sinful talk and bad example? All these are Antichrists and servants of the devil: every one, no matter who he is, who lives contrary to justice and the requirements of his state is an Antichrist and a minister of Satan. What better are you for not denying Christ with the lips, or not denouncing your faith, if you deny him in work, and lose him by mortal sin? Of what use will your faith be to you if not to serve for your deeper damnation? What else do you do when you allow yourself to be seduced by the antichrists you live amongst but renounce Christ in work? What is the false oath you have taken but renouncing God for the sake of some trifling temporal gain? When you indulge in impure thoughts and desires, what else are you doing but stamping on your heart the words: "I deny Christ"? When you sin by unchaste touches, do you not bear that same sign on your hand? In a word, every mortal sin you commit in thought, word, or action, is nothing else but a declaration that

although you do not abjure your faith in Christ, yet you refuse him the love and obedience due to him, and you refuse it for the sake of some wealth, honor, or pleasure that the spirit of the hellish Antichrist offers you. Amen.

INDEX.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT.
The terrible signs that are to precede the last day of general judgment 3

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.
The Judge as God..... 10

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.
The suddenness with which the last day shall come... 18

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.
The Judge as man..... 26

SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.
The happy end of our years..... 33

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.
The Judge as our model..... 40

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.
The Judge as our redeemer..... 47

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.
The summoning of the dead to judgment..... 55

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.
The examination of the sinner in judgment..... 62

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.
The accusation of the criminal in the judgment..... 70

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.
The conviction of the criminal in the judgment..... 77

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
Avoiding idleness if we wish to gain Heaven..... 230

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The reason for the last judgment..... 237

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
Presumptuously scrutinizing the divine decrees..... 244

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The justice of the divine decrees..... 251

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
Another reason for the general judgment..... 257

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The sufficient though unequal graces for salvation that are given to all men..... 264

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The gaining an increase of Heavenly glory in this life 271

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The easy means that we may use to increase our glory in Heaven..... 278

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The frequent consideration of death..... 287

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
How to make the thought of death useful..... 293

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
Careful preparation for death..... 300

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The premature death of the idle..... 307

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The remorse of the dying on account of time lost through idleness..... 313

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The uncertainty of death..... 319

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
Purgatory after death..... 325

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
Death will come unexpectedly..... 330

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The unhappy death of the wicked..... 335

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The coming and the cruelty of antichrist..... 342

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.
The last sentence of the Judge on the criminal..... 85

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.
The frequent hearing of the word of God..... 91

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.
The eternal fire of hell..... 97

QUADRAGESIMA SUNDAY.
The thoughts of the reprobate in hell..... 104

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.
The pain caused to the damned by the thought of Heaven, or the pain of loss..... 111

THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT.
The pain of sense in hell..... 117

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.
The company of the reprobate in hell..... 123

FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT.
The justice and mercy of God in condemning the sinner 129

EASTER SUNDAY.
The hope in and truth of our future resurrection..... 137

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.
The consolation to be derived from the resurrection in the trials of life..... 141

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.
The profit we can derive from the consideration of the trials of the just and the prosperity of the wicked, as far as the resurrection is concerned.... 148

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.
The justice and short duration of the trials of the just and the prosperity of the wicked..... 155

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.
The consideration of our last end..... 163

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.
God's earnest wish to save the souls of all men..... 170

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.
The hope of the just to attain eternal happiness, although they have formerly committed grievous sins 176

PENTECOST SUNDAY.
The vanity of the hope of Heaven in those who do not keep the commandments of God..... 183

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The hope of Heaven that is founded on certain pious practices is very deceitful..... 190

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The timely reception of the Viaticum..... 197

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The false hope of the sinner who trusts in the mercy of God..... 202

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The vain hope of a death-bed repentance..... 208

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
The worthlessness of a deathbed repentance..... 216

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.
Powerful means of salvation that all men have at hand 223

17191